Why Am I Single?

A Theological and Socio-economic History of Feminism

Mohammed Ibrahim Ludwick

Why Am I Single?

A Theological and Socio-Economic History of Feminism

Muhammed Ibrahim Ludwick

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

(In the name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful)

Table of Contents

Introduction.....6
Chapter 1: The Competitive Advantage of Patriarchy.....10
Patriarchy and War
Inter-generational Continuity
Survival, Hierarchy and the Gendered Division of Labor
The Link Between Sexuality and Social and Economic Stability
Is War Inevitable?
Is Patriarchy Unjust?
Chapter 2: Biblical Foundations.....26
A Male Image of God
Original Sin
Monasticism and the Value of Women
The Mandate to Accept Oppression
Chapter 3: Christianization.....36
Empire, Citizenship, and the "Other"
Family and Power
The Rise and Decline of Convents
Concentration of Power
Chapter 4: The Protestant Reformation.....55
Protestantism and Individualism
Decline in Feminine Conceptions of Divinity and Further Pressure on Convents
Medicine, Power, and Witch Hunts
The Wars of the Reformation
The Shift to a Secular Economy
Chapter 5: The Age of Colonialism and Reason.....69
Replacing Revelation with Reason
Progress as Worship
Liberty and Profit
Evolution and Gender

The Quest for Equality
Empire Building
Men's Role in Formulating Feminist Discourse
Chapter 6: The Industrial Revolution.....69
The Agrarian Revolution
Competition and Consumption
Replacing the Family
The Cost of Economic Thought
Replacing the Human
Female Formal Labor Force Participation from the Perspective of Men
Feminism's Symbiotic Relationship with Industry
Chapter 7: The Nation-State.....118
Materialism, Violence, and the Political Value of Men
Justifying Growing State Power
Sovereignty and the Quest for Omnipotence
Domestic Violence and the State
Public Education: Industrialization of Feminine Labor
The State-Industry Nexus
Seeking Protection via the State
A Deeper Look at First Wave Feminism
The Male Character of the Public Sphere
Chapter 8: Money and Finance.....150
The Nature of Credit
The Legalization of Usury
The Rise of Central Banks
Finance, State, and Industry
Finance and Individualism
The Cantillon Effect and Social Engineering
Exporting Finance and Feminism
Chapter 9: Consumerism.....173
Maximizing the Utility of Gender
Desire as a Driver of Consumption and Production
Applying Industrial Logic to Sexuality and Consumption

The Social Isolation Multiplier
Bloodlust: Sexual Desire and Warfare
Innovation, Salvation, and Contraception
Theological Optimism and Disposable Culture
Sexuality and Social Control
Chapter 10: The Future of Feminism.....201
The Ecological Cost of Equality
Technology and the War for Equality
Demographic Crisis and Immigration
Red-pilled Subculture and Toxic Masculinity
The End of Moral Superiority
Chapter 11: Islam.....229
Gender Roles as Parameters for Constructing Societies
Impact of Gender Segregation on Individuals
War Against Divine Will
Politicized History
Islam as a World System
A Timeless Solution to Modern Problems
Disentangling Islam and Feminism
Seeking Truth through History

Introduction

"Why do men and women pray separately in mosques?"

A German social worker posed this question to me during a discussion about visitation with my son. She wanted to make it a condition of visitation that I not take my son into any mosque during the visit. When I asked why, she said that the separation of men and women was demeaning to women. If my son were to see this, it would be harmful to him, she said.

I responded that it was actually quite the opposite; Islamic rules on separating men and women are a protection for women and a sign of their value. As I began to explain this, I told her the wisdom of separating men and women is actually so deep that I could write a book about it. And that's what I decided to do.

The reason that it would have taken me so long to explain is the way I came to Islam. I was deeply immersed in studying world politics, history, economics, and other social sciences. It was through the lens of the various crises facing the world that the wisdom of Islam began to dawn on me. Gender roles are fundamental to the construction and maintenance of any culture or civilization, so the logic of gender roles is closely linked to the ideology and rationale that moves a society.

When I started to grapple with the social worker's question, it quickly became clear that it was a loaded question. Asking why men and women pray separately in the mosque assumes gender mixing as a natural state, and gender segregation as an aberration. This is a byproduct of the intense European penchant toward individualism. If individual enjoyment and pleasure are the main purpose of existence, separating men and women is an affront. After all, men and women enjoy looking at and interacting with each other. To prevent them from doing so is constricting their freedom to satisfy their desires. This is a very egoistic perspective, however, because interactions between men and women can have repercussions for society at large.

I realized that the best approach to this question was to step outside of the assumptions that shaped it, while still grasping the essence of the question. The question: "Why do men and women pray separately in

mosques?" can be inverted: "Why has gender mixing been normalized?" Answering the second question gives a much more comprehensive perspective than the first. The first provokes a justification of gender segregation, while the second question asks us to consider why different societies would take different approaches to gender roles. The first question pushes a person to take an apologetic tone, when in fact it is the one rejecting the divine command who has taken an indefensible position.

This line of inquiry shows why science can never be truly objective. Every journey in search of knowledge must begin with a question, and the nature of the questions we ask frames both what we learn and how we interpret that knowledge. This book is based on the idea that we can best understand the wisdom of gender segregation by understanding the origins and motives of gender mixing.

In a way, rules and norms about gender are policies, and one of the best ways to understand policies is to consider who benefits from them. The mainstream narrative (or "orthodoxy," if you will) constructs feminism as a grassroots movement led by individuals struggling to improve the condition of women. This book does not deny the agency of individual women in bringing about feminist reforms. However, if we consider the broader beneficiaries of feminist reforms and those with material interests in feminism, the story becomes much more complex.

The assumption that women are the primary beneficiaries of the women's movement can actually distract from the broader interests connected to feminism. This same problem appears frequently in Western medicine — medical research frequently focuses so much on optimizing certain metrics that it loses sight of side effects. In many cases, the side effects of a treatment can be worse than the condition they are meant to treat. Similarly, women's movements have no doubt improved and "treated" the condition of women in many ways, but they also have a number of negative "side effects". Overly individualistic histories can focus so heavily on victories and achievements that they miss many of the side effects of social change.

This book takes a broad perspective to explain the motives of changes in gender relations in Western culture. It looks at historical trends that led to the rise of feminism and the beliefs and circumstances that drove those changes. Two types of concerns drove this change — moral and material.

To understand moral changes, we have to understand changes in beliefs and values. These changes, as often as not, are driven by material concerns. Thus, to understand the moral concerns, we have to consider who the political and economic winners and losers are when it comes to changes in morals.

To truly understand feminism (and by extension, the normalization of gender mixing), it is necessary to step outside of the theological assumptions underlying feminist discourse. This is very difficult from an individualist, liberal perspective, because secularism and liberalism view themselves as universal and areligious, rather than as a context-specific ideology based on subjective assumptions. The reality is that feminism developed within a religious context, based on religious precepts, and is still laden with religious beliefs and assumptions.

Liberalism, generally speaking, seeks to construct history in its own image; a progressive march toward ever greater freedom and happiness. Socio-economic analysis is well-suited to the project of deconstructing this worldview, because it seeks to understand social change from the perspective of cold, hard political and financial interests. When I began to analyze feminism as a historical movement from a socio-economic perspective, I came to a startling conclusion; women are not, in fact, the main beneficiaries of feminism.

Neither a theological perspective nor socio-economic analysis is sufficient to understand feminism or the normalization of gender mixing on its own. Theology is intrinsically linked with the political and economic principles on which a society operates. Theology, as it were, is how a society understands itself and its purpose in the world, and the methods which it may use to achieve its purpose. There is a constant back and forth between politics, economics, and beliefs. This book explores how a simultaneous interplay between theology, politics, and economics shaped the development of feminism. This is a fascinating topic not only for the history of feminism, but also for understanding how the fields of theology, politics, and economics have all influenced each other in the Western tradition.

This perspective is of critical importance in the modern era. People from all religious traditions are under siege by a perennialist worldview which dismisses the importance of theology, reducing all morality to vague and subjective ideas about being a “good person.” There is a motive behind this

trend; it helps corrupt elites to cover their crimes by claiming that they are not crimes at all. Theological history helps to expose how beliefs can harm or benefit individuals and societies over the long-term. It also points to real cures to societal ills which address the root cause of problems rather than merely treating the symptoms. Though secularism would have us believe otherwise, many of humanity's most fundamental problems are rooted in beliefs, and it is in beliefs that we can find their solutions.

The most challenging part of this is the implications of the relationship between fundamental beliefs and institutions. While the core premise of this book is a critical deconstruction of feminism, its scope is much broader — illuminating the ways in which institutions are both reflections of and vehicles for beliefs. Feminism has reshaped the nature of social, political, and economic institutions around the world, and participation in these new or reformed institutions means living in a way which slowly but surely cultivates feminist thought in institutional participants.

Critics of feminism cannot simply disavow or reject core precepts of feminism. As long as we live and work under a legal, political, and economic order with feminism in its DNA, feminist values will shape and infuse our lives, thoughts, and relationships. It is easy to criticize the negative effects of feminism, but actually embracing an alternate paradigm is a much more difficult project than most realize. This project requires understanding the role that feminism plays in maintaining the modern world system and visualizing and implementing alternatives. Practically speaking, this means standing up against the full weight of liberal hegemony and being cut off from the easy money and easy calories of global supply chains.

Liberalism is deceptive — it appears neutral and compatible with all kinds of belief systems. Living under liberal institutions, we can easily believe that we are remaining true to our core beliefs and values, when our actions directly contradict them. Understanding the historical origins and institutional function of liberalism and feminism can help to unravel and expose this deception. If we are aware of the currents that are carrying us, we can better chart our course through the storm.

Chapter 1

The Competitive Advantage of Patriarchy

To a large extent, modern feminism defines itself in opposition to patriarchy. Understanding the origins of feminism, then, begins with understanding the origins of patriarchy.

Literally, the word "patriarchy" is defined as "a system of society or government in which the father or eldest male is head of the family and descent is reckoned through the male line."[1] Patriarchy goes back to time immemorial, although some feminist historians use archaeological evidence to argue it was less prevalent in the distant past.[2] Although the institution of patriarchy is ancient and was widespread throughout history, many feminists identify patriarchy as their prime enemy; a blight which could usher in a golden age of justice and equality if eliminated.

Patriarchy emerged out of a specific set of circumstances, so rejecting patriarchy requires also rejecting these circumstances. This story thus begins with considering why patriarchy came to be the world's predominant mode of gender relations.

Patriarchy and War

Modern dissatisfaction with patriarchy has inspired Western social scientists with a fascination for so-called "matriarchal" cultures. Feminists see in these cultures a model for a world free from the patriarchy responsible for so much of women's suffering. This line of thought has some parallels to the idea of the "noble savage," which idealizes cultures closer to nature. Nearly all societies described as "matriarchal" are relatively small, egalitarian, and depend on simple technology. These cultures are found in remote areas like islands in the

---

[1] Oxford English Dictionary

[2] Gerda Lerner argues in *The Creation of Patriarchy* that the prevalence of goddess statues giving way later on to supreme male deities is an indication of rising prevalence of patriarchy.

South Pacific, the dense jungles of the Amazon, or the foothills of the Himalayas.

There is some debate about how appropriate the term "matriarchal" really is. In many such cultures, women have greater property rights and political participation than common in patriarchal cultures. In some cases, lineage and identity are derived from the mother rather than the father. However, women in these cultures do not necessarily have the level of political authority or independence that modern feminists dream of. Some social scientists have thus challenged the label "matriarchy," which literally implies a society ruled by women.

What is agreed upon is that cultures where men dominate political leadership and identity is derived from the father's side are the norm worldwide. This begs the question; why are male-dominated societies so prevalent?

The answer may lie in agriculture. Nomadic hunter-gatherers move from place to place according to available food supplies and keep with them only what property they can carry. Without much property, attackers have little to gain through warfare. Nomadic peoples can easily avoid conflicts by simply moving somewhere else.

With agriculture, all of this changes. Domesticated animals, agricultural tools, stores of grain and seed are prizes for the conqueror. Much energy goes into improving soil with tilling and fertilizer, and the manufacture of tools and caring for work animals requires specialized structures which can also be captured. Sedentary populations can also be enslaved more easily since they are strongly connected to the land. When so much investment is put into an area, moving to a new home in the face of aggression becomes increasingly difficult. This necessitates a more martial society, since there is more to lose and more incentive for others to attack.

Traditionally, warfare has been the domain of men. Male physiology and psychology is optimized for warfare. Studies of male and female brains have shown that men's brains have more area dedicated to hand-eye coordination and spatial cognition.[3] These are the types of skills which are

---

[3] For example, see *Sex Differences in Parietal Lobe Morphology: Relationship to Mental Rotation Performance* by Koscik et al., *Vision contributes to sex differences in spatial cognition and activity interests* by Qian, et al. and so forth.

necessary for things like swinging an ax into the skull of a fast-moving enemy, or dodging a flying javelin or spear. Men also have much higher levels of testosterone than women. Testosterone is linked to aggression, muscle mass, and bone density,[4] all of which are helpful for physical combat.

Martial societies can better defend what they have built — or seize what others have built. The well-being of any group depends on giving leadership to those who are most well-suited to guiding the group to prosperity and protecting it from threats. Men's physiology makes them more likely to engage in warfare, so they are also likely to be more experienced and knowledgeable about war. If authority is granted to those who lack understanding of warfare, they will be much more likely to make mistakes which could cause the demise of the group.

Aside from the fact that women are less physiologically suited to combat, they also have to deal with menstruation, childbirth, and child-rearing, all of which make the prospect of participating in war more daunting. Given these biological circumstances, it is only natural that patriarchies have proliferated and thrived while more "matriarchal" cultures have remained small, scattered, and marginal.

Inter-generational Continuity

War is one of the most pressing and immediate threats to a group's survival, but nutrition is also essential. Agricultural societies cultivate land, harness more of its total productivity, and thereby accumulate resource surpluses. These surpluses can be used for things like organizing larger war parties and developing technology, giving them a competitive edge over hunter-gatherers.

Inheritance takes on more importance in agricultural societies, since improving farmland, refining genetics of seeds and animals, and developing agricultural tools and techniques are multi-generational projects. Improvement in all of these areas requires willingness to work for the future knowing that you will never personally see the fruit of your labor. Therein lies

---

[4] See *Increase in bone density and lean body mass during testosterone administration in men with acquired hypogonadism* by Katznelson et al. and other similar studies.

the importance of lineage and inter-generational identity. One of the deepest instincts in both humans and animals is the will to help their children succeed and thrive. The mercy and love of a mother for her children is one of the most powerful forces in the world. One of the most dangerous things you can do in the wilderness is threaten the young of a mother bear.

Men, with very few exceptions, are also happy to see their children learn and grow. If a man knows that his labor will go toward supporting his biological children, his motivation to invest in projects whose fruits he will not live to enjoy is usually much stronger. This bond is also very important for mental health; a great deal of research has discovered that children without strong links to their biological father are at much greater risk of committing crimes or suffering from mental illness.[5]

Inter-generational continuity enhances the war-making capacity of a society in multiple ways. Materially, tools and weapons are passed down from generation to generation. This process refines skills and techniques for both fighting and manufacturing weapons. Attitudes and values are also passed down from father to son in the form of codes of honor and warrior ethics. Epics and chronicles likewise form a kind of inter-generational memory about past battles.

Inter-generational memory is the basis for collective identity, which is vital for the strength and power of a group. People who feel a sense of belonging to a group are more willing to sacrifice for the sake of the group. If identity is passed through the father, men have a personal stake in the success of their children. This is commonly expressed as the honor or prestige of a family name.

Associating prestige with a particular family is important for the development of complex social organization. In a warrior society where men specialize in warfare, a family may be known for strength, courage, and honor, making the men and women of the family more desirable for marriage. Aside from the fact that an alliance by marriage with a reputable family has real value in politics and war, it is also a way of cultivating social and genetic

---

[5] See *The effect of father's absence, parental adverse events, and neighborhood disadvantage on children's aggression and delinquency: A multi-analytic approach* by Kim and Glassgow and other similar studies.

qualities. Certain genetic characteristics help make a good leader or warrior, just as there are genetic characteristics that make a workhorse distinct from a racing horse.

Among elite classes, matchmaking can be an elaborate process of intensive analysis and negotiation, with the aim of generating offspring who will be well suited to particular roles. Many complex agricultural civilizations developed meticulous genealogies for ruling classes, including warrior, scholarly and priest classes. The stakes are high in these matchmaking processes. Since human groups and nations exist in a constant state of competition and conflict with one another, the quality of political and military leadership can determine a society's survival.

Returning to the metaphor of horses, imagine your family is participating in a horse race. There are ten horses in the race, and the owners of the five horses that finish first will receive a large cash prize. Those who finish last will have their men executed and their women taken as concubines by the winners. Each family must breed a horse with the best chances of victory. There is no room in such an equation for theories about all horses being created equal. You would certainly try to raise a horse with the best genetics possible. How would you feel if you learned that someone was letting a heavy-set draft stallion in with your purebred racing mare every night? It would be a threat to your family's survival.

Thus, the chastity of women and their loyalty and obedience to their husbands and fathers is essential to the success and survival of a society. The role of men as warriors and political leaders also makes them more qualified in some ways to assess genetic matches for their daughters. They can evaluate the genetic and social characteristics of a potential match, and whether these qualities will be well suited to the situation of the family. Given the importance of breeding for warfare, this gives a major advantage to societies where men can regulate the behavior of women.

This authority has certainly been abused throughout history, and modern feminist discourse tends to focus on these abuses. These abuses notwithstanding, the usefulness of men's "control over women's sexuality," as feminists would describe it, is undeniable. This is not to justify forced marriages, which have been common among nobility throughout history. Harmony in marriage is important for raising healthy children, so forced

marriages for the sake of political or military interests can be detrimental to a group's well-being in the long term.

Still, the value of arranged marriages in general is very helpful for explaining why human cultures are predominantly patriarchal. Adopting such practices is essential for survival and competition, which helps to explain why less patriarchal cultures exist mainly in remote, isolated areas.

Survival, Hierarchy and the Gendered Division of Labor

Hierarchy is essential for the functioning of any social system. In most cultural traditions, protection and preservation of women and children takes precedence over the protection of men. Women and children are vital to the life of society and more vulnerable than men, so men learn to show special consideration for them. Power frequently goes hand in hand with responsibility. While men in patriarchal societies have power over women and children, they also have a responsibility to protect and care for them.

Such hierarchical systems of prioritization are vital even for the functioning of the human body. In emergency situations like a famine, the body's innate intelligence prioritizes some cells above others — for example, fat cells are consumed first, then the more essential cells. This happens on an unconscious level, but the body's intelligence is able to perceive threats and respond accordingly. In other words, there exists within the body perception, hierarchy and authority. The body is able to perceive danger, prioritize the preservation of some cells, and enforce those priorities.

Human groups function in much the same way. Authority is necessary for survival, because in an emergency there is not always time to discuss everything and reach a consensus. Sometimes it is necessary to respond to an emergency as soon as a threat is perceived. Just as the body has various sensory organs for perceiving threats, different members of human societies perceive different kinds of threats. The scope of an individual's perception depends on what role they play in the society.

Men traditionally acted as the sensory organ responsible for perceiving external threats. For almost all of history, men have formed a kind of protective circle around women. Since women's work revolved around the home, they would be less aware of external threats than men who went out on hunting and war parties. The survival and success of societies thus depended on the authority of men to make emergency decisions. Women, in their capacity within the home, are not as well positioned to make such decisions, especially under pressure. If women had equal decision-making power, communicating the nature of the threat to them and reaching a consensus on a response could take considerable time, endangering the group.

This might not be the case if women participated in hunting and warfare more, but there are multiple reasons why they didn't. Most importantly, male and female physiology support a gendered division of labor. It's a common trope that women are better at multitasking than men, but this stereotype is supported by a number of formal studies. Multitasking, where women have a neurological advantage, lends itself well to traditional modes of female labor such as weaving, educating children, and watching a cooking pot all at the same time. By contrast, hunting and warfare require more singular focus. A number of studies have shown that men perform better on single-task-based tests that require this kind of focus.

Feminists would argue that these gender differences are reinforced by socialization, and that women can adapt to many typically male roles and behaviors if given the chance. As time goes on, despite decades of educational programs that treat men and women as equals, evidence continues to support the role of gender specific hormones in shaping physiological development and cognition. Testosterone is linked to stronger focus,[6] while estrogen has been linked to less interference while performing multiple tasks simultaneously.[7]

Furthermore, for most of history, children played an important economic role starting from early childhood, so childbearing was not optional for those who had the ability. Women and children were also frequently tasked with caring for the elderly since their work revolved around the home. Both

---

[6] *On the effect of testosterone on brain behavioral functions*, Peter Celec, et al.

[7] Tim Killeen, et al. *Increasing cognitive load attenuates right arm swing in healthy human walking*

care for children and elderly require patience and empathy. Modern research has also confirmed that women tend to be more empathetic than men, which makes them more adept as caretakers.[8] Women also tend to be more patient than men and less likely to take risks.[9,10] Testosterone is linked to higher levels of anger and aggression, which makes men less suited to the challenging process of educating young children.[11]

Many traditional modes of production require a continuous presence in the home. Gardening, raising poultry, preserving food for the winter, tanning leather, raising children and caring for the sick and elderly are all activities that are tied strongly to one place and require consistent attention. Given the neurological advantages that women have in performing such tasks, it makes little sense to train them for warfare or hunting.

Even if we suppose, as feminists argue, that these gender differences are the result of socialization, this socialization still represents a kind of accumulated social capital.[12] Discarding traditional gendered divisions of labor means losing all of this efficiency and embarking on the costly journey of developing new modes of labor.

Sexuality and Socio-Economic Stability

Sexuality plays a key role in the formation of families, and families play an important role in the development of social and intellectual capital. This applies not only to inter-generational accumulation of experience and wealth, but also within a single lifetime. Stable parental relationships support the healthy development of children, and when the home is the main site of

---

[8] *Gender differences in the relationship between empathy and forgiveness,* Toussaint and Webb

[9] *Gender differences and time preferences*, Dittrich and Leipold

[10], *Gender differences in risk taking: a metanalysis,* Byrnes and Miller

[11] *Testosterone and aggressive behavior in men,* Menelaos L Batrinos

[12] For the purpose of this book, social capital refers to relationships, social networks, and the capacity for different members of those networks to work effectively together toward a common goal.

economic production, the health of marriages directly impacts the health of the economy.

In traditional societies, family reputation often filled the role that corporate brands do today. A brand represents a corporation's reputation for producing safe products of good quality. Likewise, families in traditional settings provide goods or services which depend on and build the family reputation. In the case of both corporate brands and family reputation, reputation attracts consumers of goods and services, and the profits from this business are reinvested into growth, production, and research and development.

When families break down, a lot of value is lost. The same is true of brands; a brand alone can be worth billions of dollars, and the loss of a brand represents a huge economic loss. Organizations also develop team dynamics which take years or even generations to mature. These dynamics are also a form of social capital with intrinsic value, and are sometimes called "company culture."

Preserving and developing social, cultural, and genetic capital all require a framework for stable relationships, where interpersonal dynamics, knowledge, and behaviors can grow and thrive. Divorce has heavy costs in a society where economic organization is based on kinship, just as bankruptcy has heavy costs for a corporation. Adultery has even more severe costs. It sabotages the process of selective breeding and destroys trust within the family, damaging their ability to work as a team.

In a society where reproduction and kinship are core to political and economic vitality, it is imperative to prevent the incidence of adultery. It is similarly important to regulate patterns of marriage in a way that is beneficial to society, and this generally requires some input from the broader community into the marriage process.

As configurations of relationships increase in complexity, so does the overall level of complexity, specialization, and productivity of the society. Without regulating marriage and courtship, this social development cannot take place. The modern alternative is to mostly eliminate the political and economic role of the family and transfer it instead into larger, centralized organizations like corporations and modern states. For most of human history, however, this was not an option due to resource availability.

Regulating both male and female sexuality is vital to the smooth functioning and growth of a society based upon kinship. All members of a society may be involved to some extent in the regulation of sexuality, but ultimate authority must rest somewhere. Those most qualified to hold this authority are those most aware of the threats and opportunities facing the family and the society as a whole. In most cases, this means men.

Collectively, men form the main sensory organ to perceive threats and opportunities external to the society. Individually, a man is the main sensory organ for a household to perceive external threats and opportunities within the society. This applies to dangers within a single city or tribe, such as the risk of economic marginalization. In a society where the household is at the center of economic life, the compatibility of couples can have repercussions for the entire community, so it is necessary to rely on the experience and knowledge of the community during the matchmaking process.

Locating political, economic, and social power within the family (as opposed to external institutions like hospitals, schools, universities, corporations, or government agencies) has the benefit of substantially strengthening marriages. In modern contexts, many people have their strongest social bonds with schoolmates or colleagues in the workplace, because the bond of working together toward a common goal builds social bonds. Likewise, if a husband and wife work together toward a common goal, they are more likely to sympathize and bond with each other by means of shared interests and labor.

Transferring economic and political power out of the family and into larger, non-kinship organizations opens up many possibilities for pursuing sexual desire, because marriage, as an institution, becomes peripheral to the survival and success of the society. However, this also means that marriages are much more likely to break down, since they lose much of their economic value. Shared political and economic interests act as a bond which can inspire love. The more family members depend on each other and the more they support each other, the more they will love each other.

There is thus a real utility to love, beyond sexual and emotional gratification. This utility benefits the whole of society, just as adultery can harm the society. If marriage is central to the political, economic, and social

health of a society, the most successful society will be the one most effective in making the most beneficial matches for marriage. This in turn requires limiting the interactions between men and women to avoid the risk of bonds of love occurring in a way that would threaten the society. Such threats manifest both in the form of unsuitable matches and extramarital affairs that threaten productive, healthy marriages.

A modern, individualistic perspective sees regulation of sexuality by the broader society as oppressive. Yet, even if marriage and family becomes economically irrelevant, there are still costs to abandoning regulation of sexuality. Even if corporations and governments take over the political and economic role of traditional families, they cannot necessarily take over the moral and emotional functions of a stable family. Although they profit from the social and genetic wealth accumulated over generations of familial stability, they can neither preserve nor develop this wealth.

Is War Inevitable?

For all of human history, war has been an inescapable reality. Resources on the earth are limited. As the human population expands and resources like herds of wild animals, fisheries, and forests are depleted, conflicts arise. In this sense, war among humans is as natural an occurrence as forest fires, droughts, or floods. A destructive force, but a force that is part of a kind of natural equilibrium.

Many feminists, despite arguing that gender is a social construct, acknowledge that men are more violent and warlike than women, and present this as evidence for the need to abolish patriarchy. The dream of world peace has gained significant traction in the past century. The charter of the United Nations, of which nearly every nation in the world is a member, holds peace as one of its primary goals. War, like other destructive forces of nature, is unpleasant, so the idea of eliminating all violence is understandably appealing.

Some feminists believe that a decrease in the power and influence of men and a commensurate increase in the power and influence of women could be a means of moving toward the dream of world peace, or at least a more

peaceful world. Feminist author Carol P. Christ conceives war as being essential to patriarchy, which she defines as:

> "An integral system created at the intersection of the control of women, private property, and war – which sanctions and celebrates violence, conquest, rape, looting, exploitation of resources, and the taking of slaves."[13]

This leaves little room for the possibility that there might be some instances of just violence, or that violence might be central to the purpose of human existence. This is a worldview that sees both patriarchy and violence as aberrations that must be eliminated. Yet the basic nature of human beings and the earth tends inexorably toward violence, as with other destructive forces.

Suppose war and patriarchy were abolished. Would this actually result in a utopia of human happiness? Humans consistently show an ability to increase their consumption to match any level of production. We are driven by desires, and the nature of our brains is that they become saturated by biochemical reward responses when there is unlimited food, sex, and entertainment. In other words, if a human's desires are fulfilled without limitations, they will become numbed to pleasure and need more resources in order to achieve the same level of gratification they felt before.

This phenomena is well known with drug addicts; a heroin addict must continuously increase the dose to get the same feeling of being "high," because his neurotransmitters have been desensitized by overloading. At some point, the addict no longer enjoys taking heroin at all, but continues just to avoid withdrawal symptoms. This is an extreme example, but the same dynamic applies with many other types of gratification. When applied to healthy pursuits, this is not necessarily a bad thing; rather, it motivates a person to achieve bigger and better things.

Destructive forces in nature help to avoid the stagnation that comes with over-stimulation. Floods, war, famines, and plagues bring about hard times, and overcoming these hardships itself brings a sense of gratification

---

[13] Carol P. Christ. *A new definition of patriarchy: Control of women's sexuality, private property, and war.*

and achievement. If these hardships are suppressed, over-consumption itself will trigger them. When overeating becomes widespread, it might exhaust soil fertility, fisheries, or wild game stocks and trigger a famine. After the famine, people might derive much more gratification from a much smaller amount of food than they would have previously from a large feast. A war can be triggered by similar issues; excessive consumption might lead to a conflict over scarce resources, leading to a realization of the need to better regulate consumption and regulate relations with other groups.

The naive wish to eliminate all hardship is perhaps the worst kind of catastrophe. On one hand, it requires ever increasing resource extraction to develop technologies in order to suppress or prevent destructive forces, ignoring the fact that these forces bring about equilibrium. On the other hand, it leads to an over-saturation of gratification that results in ever higher levels of consumption. This leads to a vicious cycle; new technologies are developed to overcome destructive forces, but this process of development itself brings about crises. New technologies are then developed to counter the new crises, resulting in an intensifying vicious cycle of destruction.

Someone who accepts the hardship of life without trying to eliminate it will be occupied with the struggle for survival. People with danger and hardship removed from their life seek out artificial danger and drama in the form of sports, entertainment, or other artificial realities. In the Roman Empire, this took the form of capturing slaves and exotic animals and having them fight each other to the death. Later in the course of the empire, they even flooded the Colosseum and had naval battles to keep the population entertained.

In the new Roman Empire of America, movies continuously increase the use of special effects, sex, violence, and other means of emotional captivation to keep audiences entertained. Both the old Roman and new American entertainment industries consume huge amounts of resources. Capturing slaves and wild animals and transporting them to arenas was a very energy-intensive process. Producing today's Hollywood movies requires many thousands of trained specialists. The same goes for the video game industry, which has surpassed Hollywood in providing people with an artificial sense of drama and struggle.

So there are real ecological, psychological, and social costs to the quest to eliminate war. There are also a number of benefits that come with war. Wars reduce excess population and lead to stronger members of society surviving and reproducing, increasing the overall vitality of the population. In modern times, there has been much concern about overpopulation — the modern solution is to kill unborn children in the wombs of their mothers. An estimated 40 million babies are aborted every year worldwide, more than double the number of annual deaths during the Second World War. Phenomena like plagues, famines, and war achieve the same effect, but unlike abortion, they improve the overall vitality of the population.

The idea that humanity and the earth are somehow flawed for tending toward warfare (and therefore patriarchy) is thus very problematic. Rejecting patriarchy and seeking to destroy it necessarily entails rejecting human nature and the balance of the natural world, and seeking to change it. So how did modern feminism come to oppose patriarchy?

Is Patriarchy Unjust?

Patriarchy, as with any system of government, can be either just or unjust, benevolent or abusive. One patriarchy could be run by men who are completely devoted to women and work hard to support them, while another might be run by sadistic misogynists who harm women for the sake of their own personal pleasure.

Injustice naturally leads to social strife, so if patriarchy were fundamentally unjust, one would expect to see many more historic incidences of gendered social conflict. One might argue that history was written by men, so this conflict has been omitted from history, but this seems unlikely. Even biased historical accounts frame events to favor the victors, but they still record the conflicts. For example, we know about many heretical sects wiped out by Christian orthodoxy solely from the writings refuting them. The records left by their opponents may not fairly or accurately address the teachings of these sects, but they still are sufficient to demonstrate their existence.

There are, however, no such records of any pre-modern opposition to a gendered division of labor, or calls for women to have the same rights and responsibilities as men, or for women to be financially independent from their husbands. Since patriarchy was so integral to the order of so many societies, it was probably not seen as unjust, because men and women alike derived considerable benefit from it. Any power relation has the potential to be abused, whether it be monarchy, a patient-doctor relationship, a marriage, or patriarchy. These relations also have the potential to be highly beneficial to their participants. Camille Paglia, a modern critic of feminism, comments:

> Men have sacrificed and crippled themselves physically and emotionally to feed, house, and protect women and children. None of their pain or achievement is registered in feminist rhetoric, which portrays men as oppressive and callous exploiters.[14]

If patriarchy has actually benefited women in many cases, why did feminists come to view it as innately problematic? Economic circumstances present in traditional societies can actually act as a kind of safeguard against abuses within a patriarchy. In a gendered division of labor, women's labor is vital to the survival of society, which gives women substantial leverage even if ultimate authority rests with men.

When both the immediate survival and long term success of society depend on children, women's role in giving birth and raising children will be highly valued. Likewise, when the economic life of society revolves around household production that depends on women, the collective bargaining power of women will be enormous. This means that in traditional economies, abusing women can carry an immediate and very expensive price. Even if men do not believe in transcendent principles of respecting and honoring women, dealing with them kindly and fairly is a simple matter of self-interest as long as they occupy a central position in the economic life of society.

In modern economies, labor unions have a similar kind of power, and abuse by employers can result in costly strikes. In a traditional economic system, women dominate the food and beverage industry, textiles, garments,

---

[14] Camille Paglia, *Challenging the Male Mystique*, The Washington Post

education, child care, medicine (both the preparation of medicines and the provision of care), household cleaning, and social services, including mental health support and entertainment. These industries collectively represent a large percentage of any economy, and the threat of a "strike" in these fields represents substantial power and influence.

Traditionally male dominated industries like hunting, fishing, production of grains and livestock, security and defense, and natural resource extraction (including mining and forestry) are also indirectly dependent on female labor. In a traditional economy, production in these areas grinds to a halt without the support of women.

So traditional gendered divisions of labor contain some internal safeguards against excessive abuse. Understanding the origin of opposition to patriarchy, then, requires understanding how and why these safeguards failed.

The vast majority of modern opposition to patriarchy originates from a well-defined geographic and historic context — Western Europe from the early industrial period until the present. So what was so special about this context that it gave rise to a social movement that rejected not only Western European patriarchy, but all forms of patriarchy? On the surface, the economic changes of the Industrial Revolution is an obvious place to start. However, on a more fundamental level, these changes were shaped by beliefs. To understand the true roots of feminism we must start with the most influential text in the Western tradition— the Bible.

Chapter 2

Biblical Foundations

Actions are born from thoughts, and thoughts are shaped by beliefs. Feminism emerged in an explicitly Christian context. Did Christianity lead to the oppression of women? For most feminist theorists, the answer is unambiguous, "Yes!"

Simone de Beauvoir, one of the most important feminist theorists, writes:

> Lawmakers, priests, philosophers, writers, and scholars have gone to great lengths to prove that women's subordinate condition was willed in heaven and profitable on earth. Religions forged by men reflect this will for domination: they found ammunition in the legends of Eve and Pandora.[15]

Feminist theologian Mary Daly famously put it even more succinctly:

> If God is male, then male is God.[16]

The archetypal feminist views religions as tools manufactured by men with the express intent of oppressing women. Why, then, if religions in general were developed by men with the intent of oppressing and dominating women, did the feminist movement emerge in Western Europe and not India, Mesoamerica, or East Asia?

---

[15] Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*

[16] Mary Daly, *Beyond God the Father: Toward a Philosophy of Women's Liberation*

A Male Image of God

Many instances of Biblical narrative can lead readers to develop a conception of God with similarities to human beings.[17] What eventually became orthodox Christian doctrine formally defined God as a human being:

> In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God...The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth...No one has ever seen God, but the one and only Son, who is himself God and is in closest relationship with the Father, has made him known.[18]

This statement clearly conveys the idea that Jesus is a manifestation of God, which is to affirm that God is a human male. Jesus is also described as the image of God:

> He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together.[19]

A literal conception of God as a human male cannot help but point to the conclusion that men are more divine than women. Paul of Tartus, the author of at least seven of the 27 books of the New Testament, explicitly excluded women from being part of the image of God:

---

[17] For example, in Genesis 2:2, God is described as resting on the seventh day of creation, suggesting a tiredness similar to that of humans.
[18] John 1:1,1:14, 1:18
[19] Colossians 1:15-17

> A man ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God; but woman is the glory of man.[20]

Christian thought also links the concepts of fatherhood and godliness, reinforcing the idea of man as God. The metaphor of a "heavenly father" makes some sense; there are analogues between the role of God and a father as an authority figure, protector, and provider. The use of this metaphor increased considerably in the New Testament; in the Old Testament, God is likened to a father just 13 times, while the New Testament uses the word around 150 times. The notion of God having a son strongly reinforces the analogy between the divine and human— and more specifically, male.

The conception of divinity embodies the highest ideals and purpose of a society. Growing neurological evidence indicates that worship is something innate to human beings,[21] as instinctive as eating, sleeping, or reproducing. This means that worship, like other fundamental human needs, cannot be "shut off." In religious contexts, the words "worship" and "service" are synonymous; worship may take the form of labor or sacrifice on the behalf of a divinity or deity.

To direct worship toward something is to deify it, and deifying something means to direct worship toward it. There is clearly a lot of potential for abuse here. Anyone who can convince others to deify them can harness the human instinct for worship and direct it toward pursuing their own interests. It was common for rulers in the ancient world to claim to be gods or descended from the gods for this reason. This same potential for abuse is also present when it comes to teaching women that God is a human male.

The majority of modern feminists are critical of patriarchal tendencies in all religions, but this tradition began with criticism of Christianity. For related reasons, there is a strong affinity among many modern feminists for pagan traditions. Polytheistic religions feature an abundance of goddesses, which is a logical counter against oppression resulting from the deification of men. The cover of the first issue of *Ms.* magazine, one of the most influential feminist periodicals, had a picture of

---

[20] 1 Corinthians 11:7

[21] Andrew Newberg et al., *Why Won't God Go Away? Brain Science and the Biology of Belief*

Kali, a Hindu goddess of death and destruction who wears a necklace made of severed male heads, on the cover of its first edition.

Despite the Biblical tendency toward visualizing God as a human male, it was not something unanimously agreed upon by early Christians. The New Testament documents a number of major disputes in the early days of the Church. In many cases, what came to be orthodoxy was simply the opinion of one group that prevailed over others. Those espousing opposing views might have been martyred, leaving them unable to argue their points. Texts were destroyed, lost, or excluded from scripture due to the preferences of compilers. When Christianity became the official religion of the Roman empire, political pressure also began to shape theological precepts. This dynamic was especially apparent in the Council of Nicea.

When the Roman emperor Constantine converted to Christianity, he wished to Christianize the empire, but he also saw a need to standardize Christian doctrine, since a diversity of theological standpoints existed within the empire. After convening bishops from around the empire, arguments about the nature of God dragged on for days. Constantine pressured the bishops to reach an agreement, formalizing the doctrine of the trinity and the idea of Jesus as God incarnate.

Politically speaking, there were clear advantages to adopting a human male image of God in the context of Rome. An abstract, universal God like that of Judaism would have come as a major shock to pagan Romans, who were used to representing their gods in human form.

A pagan pantheon composed of both male and female deities might make women subordinate to men, but replacing a pantheon with a unitary and universal God embodied as a human male negates the idea of female divinity while assigning an explicitly male character to divinity. This theological archetype would exert a steady influence on Christian society for centuries, contributing to ever worsening conditions for women, ultimately generating the historical trauma that underlies modern feminist consciousness.

Original Sin

The majority of modern feminists view religion as a deliberate patriarchal and misogynistic project. They see narratives that characterize women as evil or inferior as being invented to justify male dominance. The most prominent of these narratives is that of original sin. The Bible describes Eve as the one initiating the first disobedience to God:

> So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate.[22]

According to this narrative, Adam also placed blame for this action squarely on his wife:

> He [God] said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?" The man said, "The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate."[23]

In this version of events, God punishes to all of the offenders, but he takes Eve to task first, announcing that:

> I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children.
> Your desire shall be contrary to your husband, but he shall rule over you.[24]

[22] Genesis, 3:6
[23] Genesis, 3:11
[24] Genesis, 3:16

Early Christian authors theorized that all humanity carries the weight of Eve's sin. Early church father Tertullian, while reprimanding some women for their love of beautiful clothing, once said:

> And do you not know that you are (each) an Eve? The sentence of God on this sex of yours lives in this age: the guilt must of necessity live too. You are the devil's gateway: you are the unsealer of that (forbidden) tree: you are the first deserter of the divine law: you are she who persuaded him whom the devil was not valiant enough to attack. You destroyed so easily God's image, man. On account of your desert—that is, death—even the Son of God had to die. And do you think about adorning yourself over and above your tunics of skins?[25]

If blaming women for humanity's expulsion from the garden of Eden was not enough, Christian scholars also blamed women for the death of God Himself. With such narratives as a source of its fundamental beliefs, it's not surprising that Christendom would adopt an increasingly antagonistic stance toward women. This negative view of women might also explain the Christian institution of monasticism, where renouncing contact with women is seen as the pinnacle of spiritual development. This is a worldview where the purpose of life is to attain salvation, and women are seen as an impediment to achieving this goal.

Monasticism and the Value of Women

The negative view of women and sexuality applies not only to this life, but also the afterlife. Christian critiques of Islam throughout history centered on Islam's sensual vision of paradise, filled with beautiful women. Medieval French theologian Alain of Lille wrote contemptuously of the Islamic view of paradise, where believers would "eat gluttonously, wanton and lie with women indefinitely."[26] By contrast, most conceptions of paradise in Christianity imagine the afterlife as purely spiritual and non-sensual, meaning

[25] Tertullian, On the Apparel of Women
[26] Norman Daniel, *Islam and the West*

women were both detrimental to worship and unnecessary for the supreme bliss of heavenly paradise.

The view of women as being generally worthless is visible in Christian scholar Augustine of Hippo's writing:

> I don't see what sort of help woman was created to provide man with, if one excludes procreation. If woman is not given to man for help in bearing children, for what help could she be? To till the earth together? If help were needed for that, man would have been a better help for man. The same goes for comfort in solitude. How much more pleasure is it for life and conversation when two friends live together than when a man and a woman cohabitate?[27]

Christian doctrine holds not only that Jesus is God, but also that every man must strive to emulate him. If God is All-Powerful, He would neither need a wife to support him nor to bear Him children, as He could will anything into existence immediately. From this viewpoint, the male desire and need for women is a constant reminder of a man's failure in striving toward godliness.

The reality of the human condition, contrary to Augustine's view, is that men need women very much. From the period of gestation in the womb, to lactation, to psychological formation, every successful and healthy man depends on women. Some rare men have the capacity or inclination to be celibate, but for most men, sexual relationships with women are essential for emotional and psychological health. The reality of the human condition, despite modern attempts to convert us into autonomous individuals, remains one of interdependence of men and women.

Every reminder of men's dependence on women clashes with the idea of a God who is a human male. Actualizing the theology of a male God thus requires decreasing men's dependence on women, if not eliminating women entirely. Christian men began to implement this vision in the institution of monasticism, and later by enforcing celibacy among the clergy.

The institutionalization of monasticism powered the development of political and economic structures independent of both kinship networks and

---

[27] Augustine of Hippo, *Genesi ad litteram*

the gendered division of labor. Monastic, celibate communities were very widespread in Christendom, and they were also elevated as the ideal or pinnacle of Christian achievement, with monks and priests having considerable prestige and authority. This meant that the political and economic center of gravity of the society began to shift away from families, which would decrease the importance of both gendered labor specialization and childbearing.

In most traditional societies, kinship plays a central role in the overall organization of society. As mothers, women were responsible not only for building individuals, but also for building clans and tribes. Women, in their role as mothers, had significant influence on the integrity of family structures, granting them political power and influence. The shift toward exclusively male political organizations meant that the importance and value of women in organizing society began to decline.

As long as the structure of a society entails political and economic influence for women, women will have leverage to protect themselves against severe abuse by men. If they have this leverage, most of the objectives of the modern feminist movement, such as economic autonomy and formal political representation for women, would be unnecessary. Understanding why feminism emerged in industrializing Europe and not elsewhere, then, requires understanding how women lost their political and economic leverage.

The Mandate to Accept Oppression

Other factors in Christian theology enabled uniquely severe oppression of women. Christian scripture contains a strong mandate to accept and tolerate oppression in the life of this world. Believers should "turn the other cheek" and take a passive and cooperative attitude toward cruelty and injustice by authorities.

> You have heard that it was said, "Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth."But I tell you, do not resist an evil person. If anyone slaps you on the right

> cheek, turn to them the other cheek also. And if anyone wants to sue you and take your shirt, hand over your coat as well.[28]

There are similar teachings throughout the New Testament.

> "Teacher," they said, "we know that You are honest and seek favor from no one. Indeed, You are impartial and teach the way of God in accordance with the truth. Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar or not? Should we pay them or not?" But Jesus saw through their hypocrisy and said, "Why are you testing Me? Bring Me a denarius to inspect." So they brought it, and He asked them, "Whose image is this? And whose inscription?" "Caesar's," they answered. Then Jesus told them, "Give to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's."[29]

This doctrine was later elaborated into an understanding that all authority is divinely mandated.

> Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment.[30]

The Bible also describes the relationship of a wife to her husband as analogous to the relationship of believers with Christ.

> For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior.[31]

Just as these principles encouraged believers to tolerate oppressive and tyrannical governments, they could also extend to women tolerating evil or abusive husbands. Christianity also banned divorce, making matters worse.

---

[28] Matthew 5:38-40
[29] Mark 12:14-17
[30] Romans 13:1-2
[31] Ephesians 5:23

> Some Pharisees came and tested him by asking, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?" "What did Moses command you?" he replied. They said, "Moses permitted a man to write a certificate of divorce and send her away." "It was because your hearts were hard that Moses wrote you this law," Jesus replied. "But at the beginning of creation God 'made them male and female.' 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.' So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate." When they were in the house again, the disciples asked Jesus about this. He answered, "Anyone who divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery against her. And if she divorces her husband and marries another man, she commits adultery."[32]

If a marriage was unhappy or abusive, women were effectively trapped and forced to endure their miserable condition until death, hoping for relief in the afterlife.

[32] Mark 10:2-12

Chapter 3

Christianization

Through the centuries, Christian principles transformed customs, norms and institutions in Europe. Two important trends that resulted from this process are especially relevant for understanding the emergence of feminism.

First, there was a major decline in the political role of the family, and with it a gradual rise in individualism.[33] Second, there was a continuous transfer of political and economic power toward the Church and Christian religious orders.[34] These two processes were mutually reinforcing; as the Church became more powerful, it used its influence to break down the role of extended families. In the process, it became still more powerful and further degraded the political role of extended families.

Anthropologist Joseph Henrich has convincingly argued that the reforms instituted by the Church can explain many of the idiosyncrasies of Western European culture. Among other things, Henrich's work highlights the role that Church laws and regulations played in reducing the size and influence of the family and in promoting individualism. This process of weakening the family and individualization continued from this period until the present day, shaping the social contours of the Western tradition.

Women are more integral to the family than men and more dependent on the family than men, so while the decline of extended families had adverse effects for both men and women, the effects on women were more severe. The decline of extended families would reduce the political and economic importance of women, while also depriving them of a social "safety net." Increasingly individualistic consciousness resulting from the breakdown of extended families would eventually contribute to ideas about the need for women to be independent.

Christianity was not the only factor shaping Europe's social transformation. The imperial logic of the Roman empire also played an

---

[33] See Larry Siedentop, *Inventing the Individual* and Joseph Henrich, *The WEIRDest People in the World*

[34] See Judith Herrin, *The Formation of Christendom*

important and often overlooked role in the development of feminism. Christianity was not initially an imperial religion, but through its fusion with the Roman empire, it would become one. Christianity eventually gave a powerful moral drive to the Roman imperial legacy, and feminism would later become an important torchbearer of Western moral imperialism.

Empire, Citizenship, and the "Other"

Social movements cannot live on ideology alone; they also require time and energy. Transitioning from a traditional gendered mode of labor and power relations to individualized, feminist labor relations is a costly proposition. Such a change carries not only the cost of reorganization, but also the potential losses of disrupting traditional labor patterns. The first feminist theorists began to write and organize in the context of a large wealth surplus. Most early feminists came from wealthy upper classes.

The wealth surplus that enabled the development of feminism was in many ways unprecedented in human history. And while feminists did succeed in empowering women (starting in the West), this did not mean that humanity as a whole became less hierarchical. Rather, the wealth surplus was built on an international hierarchy where a new division of labor took the place of many functions of the traditional gendered division of labor.

This hierarchy traces its roots back to the Roman empire and its concept of citizenship. In Rome, citizenship was the main legal mechanism for concentrating surplus wealth. Citizens were offered many rights and advantages over non-citizens, including the right to own property, appear in court and sue, and marry. Initially, citizenship was limited to residents of Rome, with other residents of Italy living under *jus Latii,* or Latin citizenship.

Roman citizenship was originally family-based, with the political system of Rome organized around 35 tribes. In the Social War of 560 BH/87 BC, Latin subjects of the empire demanded the same legal rights as Romans, and were eventually enrolled in one of the 35 tribes despite having no kinship ties.[35] This marked a departure from kinship based political

[35] Henrik Mouritsen, *Italian unification*

organization and a movement toward a more administrative and bureaucratic political identity.

Though Roman citizenship initially represented a duty to serve, as the empire expanded, its focus shifted toward legal rights and privileges rather than responsibility. In 624 BH/27 BC, the emperor Augustus reorganized the Roman army so that non-citizen soldiers could become citizens after 25 years of military service. The empire also granted citizenship to individuals who supported Roman rule in newly conquered areas.

This system had major advantages over traditional tribal organization, as it allowed distributing the spoils of war to a much larger and more diverse identity group. An abstract state taking the place of tribal confederations would have a lasting impact in Europe, and along with Christianity would eventually influence family dynamics.

Citizenship was originally strongly connected to religious ideas. Political life was filled with ritual, and citizenship represented the right and the responsibility to participate in those rituals. In paganism, gods were strongly linked to place; Romans believed that the city of Rome was sacred and under the protection of the Roman gods. When non-citizens served Rome, they were actually offering a kind of devotion to Roman gods. This devotion sometimes included worshiping the emperors who claimed divine ancestry.

The hierarchy of this worldview was one of nearness to the gods; Romans had more rights and privileges than non-Romans because they were seen as being closer to the Roman gods. The introduction of Christianity disrupted this whole cosmology.

Early Christian scholar Augustine of Hippo contrasted the Roman concept of citizenship with the Christian worldview in his well-known work, *City of God*, written in 222 BH/426 CE:

> ...we have learned that there is a city of God, and its Founder has inspired us with a love which makes us covet its citizenship. To this Founder of the holy city the citizens of the earthly city prefer their own gods, not knowing that He is the God of gods, not of false, i.e., of impious and proud gods, who, being deprived of His unchangeable and freely communicated light, and so reduced to a kind of poverty-stricken power, eagerly grasp at their own private privileges, and seek

> divine honors from their deluded subjects but of the pious and holy gods, who are better pleased to submit themselves to one, than to subject many to themselves, and who would rather worship God than be worshipped as God.

Augustine was speaking of a higher universal citizenship based not on someone's lineage or birthplace, but on their spiritual aspirations. Christianity's emphasis on equality would later be cited by activists seeking Biblical justification for the feminist movement. Consider Galatians 3:28:

> There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

The emperor could no longer be viewed as having divine ancestry, and nor could the ruling elite claim to be nearer to the gods. This new egalitarian philosophy came along with political and economic complications. In early Christianity, even slaves could be ordained to the priesthood, despite the high status, power, and influence of priests. The relatively egalitarian political order that emerged from Christianity was much less effective at empire building than pagan Rome had been; the failure of most of the Crusades bear witness to this. If all men could gain access to equal rights (in theory, at least) by embracing Christianity, how would it be possible to construct a hierarchy of economic exploitation in order to centralize wealth and power? If the empire could no longer claim a mandate from the Roman gods to exploit non-Romans, how would they finance the empire?

Citizenship establishes an ingroup/outgroup dynamic— in other words, it defines an "other." The concept of the "other," popularized by German philosopher Georg Hegel, would play an important role in the writings of Simone de Beauvoir, one of the most influential feminist theorists. Hegel believed that the conception of the "other" shaped the conception of self. de Beauvoir argued that women were historically viewed as an "other" by men. In a political context, the "other," or out-group, is often exploited for the benefit of the in-group.

For Christendom to achieve success at empire building, it would have to find a new conception of the "other" to justify concentration of wealth and power. Pagan Romans understood the "other" in terms of the proximity to the

Roman gods, and for the Christian inheritors of the Roman empire, the new Christian God would come to take its place. How this God is portrayed and imagined takes on great importance. For the first two centuries of Christianity no one thought to make images of God, in keeping with the Biblical prohibition on imagery.[36]

Major Christian scholars of this period including Irenaeus (died in 444 BH/202 CE), Clement of Alexandria (died in 446 BH/215 CE), Lactantius (died in 310 BH/325 CE), and Eusebius of Caesaria (died in 312 BH/339 CE) opposed making any images of Jesus. Beginning in the 3rd century BH/3rd century CE, however, images depicting Jesus as an ethnically European man began to appear. Around 311 BH/324 CE, the Emperor Constantine convened the Council of Nicea, where, despite fierce debate which escalated to physical blows, the Council declared Jesus to be both God and human and officially condemned all other doctrines as heresy.

From this point, the supreme God of Christianity was depicted as a light skinned, European male. The growth of European empires would later come at the expense of dark skinned peoples and women, who came to fill the role of the "other." Simone de Beauvoir viewed the "othering" of women as predating Christianity, but she saw Christianity as one of the main drivers of the process, especially in narratives such as the idea of Eve being created from Adam's rib. This perspective only makes sense, however, from a highly individualistic perspective.

If society is viewed as a collection of individuals, it appears that men had far more power than women in traditional societies. If it is viewed as a collection of families or households, the picture is very different. The family is a unit unto itself with its own power dynamics. Within this unit, wives and mothers occupy a central position. If a man strongly identifies with his family, abusing or harming his family is like abusing or harming himself. Likewise, if he makes sacrifices for the sake of his family it would not be a loss, but rather service to a greater whole of which he himself is part. Thus, understanding women as the "other," which was essential for de Beauvoir's feminist worldview, depended to a large extent on the development of individualism.

---

[36] See Exodus 20:4-5, Deuteronomy 5:8-9, Leviticus 26:1

In the centuries following the Christianization of the Roman empire, the Church gradually empowered itself at the expense of both women and families. In some ways, this process was analogous to the Roman dichotomy between citizens and non-citizens. Women formed a kind of underclass that provided cheap labor, much like slaves in the Roman empire. Once their position became so bad that the feminist movement gained traction, they were forced to enter the public sphere and participate in the formal labor market and politics. Under the Roman model, integration into the empire involved a process of "Romanization," where new citizens learned to speak Latin and wear togas. As women became involved in business and politics, they would adopt behavioral patterns and styles of dress in imitation of men.

In both cases, the process of obtaining equal rights meant adopting the customs and lifestyle of the dominant class. The Roman empire conquered provinces, and then gradually integrated the conquered subjects into the Roman public order. The trajectory of Western civilization would eventually erode the role of families and women, and feminism would integrate women into the public sphere in roles previously reserved for men.

Family and Power

During the decline of paganism and the rise of Christianity, Germanic tribes migrated into southern Europe and came to dominate many of the former provinces of the Western Roman empire.. Tribes were still an important organizational unit among the Germanic peoples unlike Rome, where they had been reduced to a superficial symbolic function. Germanic tribes operated according to the principle that each individual would be ruled by the law of their ancestors, with Roman law, Church canon law, and Germanic tribal law operating in parallel in many areas.

Roman chronicler Tacitus documented significant differences between the position of women among Germanic tribes compared to Rome. Tacitus, on his travels to Germania in 540 BH/98 CE, writes:

> It stands on record that armies already wavering and on the point of collapse have been rallied by the women, pleading heroically with

> their men, thrusting forward their bared bosoms, and making them realize the imminent prospect of enslavement - a fate which the Germans fear more desperately for their women than for themselves. Indeed, you can secure a surer hold on these nations if you compel them to include among a consignment of hostages some girls of noble family. More than this, they believe that there resides in women an element of holiness and a gift of prophecy; and so they do not scorn to ask their advice, or lightly disregard their replies.

In the first centuries of Germanic ascendance in Western Europe, women came to exercise more political power than had typically been the case in Rome on a number of occasions. This power was always obtained by means of family, either through inheritance or marriage. Among some tribes, it was common for a groom to give a gift to the bride on the first morning after the wedding night, and these gifts could be quite large. For example, when Chilperic I of Meringia married Galswintha in 82 BH/567 CE, he gifted her the cities of Bordeaux, Limoges, Cahors, Bearn, and Bigorre. The brides had full control over these gifts, and upon their death they would usually stay in the bride's family.

In the feudal period, a woman's property would often follow her in and out of marriage, such that if the marriage dissolved, the husband would lose the benefit of his wife's property. As late as 531 H/1137 CE, Eleanor of Aquitaine brought the entire territory of Aquitaine with her when she married the king of France, nearly doubling the size of his kingdom. She later divorced him and married the king of England, and brought her land holdings with her. After some differences with her second husband, she returned to Aquitaine as an independent ruler.

For nobility, property brought by a wife into a marriage could have serious implications for an entire kingdom. This gave some wives tremendous leverage, and by extension protection from abuse or mistreatment. During this period, noblewomen often played important administrative roles in managing kingdoms, even when it came to properties that they did not

personally own. Women could generally own property, and in some cases also managed the property and its income independently even after marriage.[37]

Changes in inheritance laws greatly constricted the opportunities for women to obtain and exercise power. These changes were partly a product of feudalism itself, which organized military forces along the lines of landholding lords backed by the clergy. In 428 H/1037 CE, the *Constituo de Feudis,* a law excluding women from inheriting fiefs, was passed by Konrad II of the Holy Roman Empire. This was part of a broader trend which aimed to prevent the breakup of feudal estates into units too small to effectively raise military forces.

This eventually led to the development of primogeniture, in which an entire kingdom or estate would be granted to the eldest son of a king or nobleman, alienating all other heirs. Primogeniture greatly disadvantaged noblewomen by mostly eliminating their means of inheriting wealth. This put them in a much more vulnerable position, as they were forced to seek status through marriage and had much less leverage inside of marriage.

Later on in the feudal period, many functions of government were transferred to bureaucracies, and the role of the family declined. With this change, the involvement of women in government and their leverage to protect their rights and pursue their interests also declined. This was representative of the general decline in the power and influence of families. This did not happen by chance; the Church enacted policies deliberately designed to decrease the influence of families and increase the property under Church control.

---

[37] Curiously, Simone de Beauvoir's history of women's rights in *The Second Sex* mostly skips this entire period, going directly from discussion of the Romans to the early modern period. This is consistent with a trend among many modern historians to regard this period as the "dark ages." The power of women in this period by means of the family does not fit well with the narrative of patriarchy being a universally oppressive institution.

The reforms included bans on a number of practices which had previously reinforced family alliances, including polygyny, cousin marriage, and arranged marriages.[38]Over centuries, this caused a shift toward smaller, nuclear families, which meant fewer relatives to inherit estates, and consequently more people bequeathing their wealth to the Church.[39] This continued until the Church and associated Christian orders eventually acquired as much as one third of the total land of Western Europe.[40]

With the decline in family size and concentration of power in the hands of the clergy and an ever smaller aristocracy, the importance of women in politics and society diminished. When women were still part of large, powerful families, marriage played an important role in politics. It also meant that women had many male relatives who might take offense and react if their sisters, nieces, or daughters were abused by their husbands. The Welsh epic "Four Branches of the Mabinogi" recounts a war that started due to the king of Ireland abusing his wife. According to the legend, the war culminates with the abused wife's relatives almost completely eliminating the population of Ireland.

As wealth and power gradually transferred from families to the Church, the power of the clergy grew. Initially, this did not automatically disadvantage women. For the first centuries of Christianity's history, celibacy was not mandatory for priests, although it was considered ideal. The wives of priests could share the responsibilities, privileges, and status of their husbands to some extent, in some case also sharing in decisions about the management of Church properties. Marriage by priests was only formally banned at the Second Lateran Council in 533 H/1130 CE, nearly nine centuries after Christianity became the official religion of Rome. The Church also banned children of priests from inheriting around the same time.

As with the aristocracy and clergy, the position of women in artisanal and merchant classes also steadily worsened under Christianity. Early on in the history of Christian Europe, wives of merchants and craftsmen were

---

[38] See Jonathon Schulz et al., *The Church, intensive kinship, and global psychological variation*

[39] See Avner Greif, *Family Structure, Institutions, and Growth: The Origins and Implications of Western Corporations*

[40] David Herlihy, *Church property on the European Continent*

sometimes vital participants in their husbands' businesses, which could grant them considerable influence and status. In some cases, the wives of craftsmen were so essential to family businesses that when their husbands died, they would inherit the rights and privileges of their husbands inside of guilds. In some cases, particularly in the textile and clothing industries, women were responsible for production, while men would trade the products their wives produced in the market.

This mutual dependence made marriage an essential economic partnership among urban classes. Especially when it involved skilled labor, it gave women significant bargaining power. Another advantage of household-based production (compared to later factory-based labor) was that men were more present to assist with household tasks, including the care and education of children. This was not only an altruistic way of supporting overwhelmed mothers, but also a necessary part of training workers in the family business.

Household-based production, like all other domains of women's power in Europe, declined toward the end of the feudal period. In Cologne, the hat makers guild prohibited women from helping their husbands, fathers, and masters at work in 779 H/1378 CE; the cloth sellers guild prohibited wives from helping their husbands cut cloth some years later, and the city council also prohibited widows of sword makers from practicing their husband's trade after his death. Women were increasingly pushed toward lower status, lower skilled and lower paying work. Eventually, only six of Cologne's 42 guilds still included female members. Though there was some regional variation, this general trend was present throughout Europe.[41]

Although some explicit laws degraded women's position, the most important factor was the decline of the family as a productive unit. Historians like Alice Clark associated this with industrialization, but others argue that the process began much earlier with increasingly formalized and restrictive production under the guilds. In some ways, this process can be seen as a continuous evolution, where guilds eventually gave rise to heavy industry.

---

[41] Martha Howell, *Women, Production, and Patriarchy in Late Medieval Cities*

The number of women owning urban real estate also steadily declined in many areas during this period. Property records of medieval Brussels indicate that the number of female real estate owners decreased during times of economic crisis, indicating that female property owners were forced to sell property to make ends meet at higher rates than men, probably due to declining earning opportunities.[42]

Peasant women made up most of the European population, but fewer records remain about how they fared under Christianity. It is clear that most worked in agriculture, and that this labor depended on a gendered division of labor where the contribution of both men and women were each indispensable and complementary to one another. However, some legal trends affected women at all levels of society. One of the most notable examples is the institution of "coverture."

Coverture first emerged from English common law, and was formalized during the reign of Henry II in the 5th/11th century H/CE, but similar practices appeared throughout Western Europe. The principle effectively eliminates women as legal persons upon marriage; instead, women are "covered" by their husbands. William Blackstone, a British jurist of the 12th/18th century H/CE, described it as follows:

> By marriage, the husband and wife are one person in law: that is, the very being or legal existence of the woman is suspended during the marriage, or at least is incorporated and consolidated into that of the husband: under whose wing, protection, and cover, she performs every thing; and is therefore called in our law–French a feme-covert;...and her condition during her marriage is called her coverture.[43]

These customs prevented women from buying or selling real properties, leaving the wife's property under almost total control of her husband. This concept takes inspiration from Christian scripture:

---

[42] Andrea Bardyn, *The gender distribution of real property in late medieval Brussels*
[43] William Blackstone, *Commentaries on the Law of England*

> But from the beginning of creation, God created them male and female. For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother, and the two shall become one flesh; so they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore, what God has joined together, no person is to separate.[44]

In addition to conceptualizing the married couple as a single body, this verse was also interpreted as prohibiting divorce. Combined, these legal injunctions rendered women extremely vulnerable to the eventuality of a bad husband. If a husband had a penchant for gambling, drinking, or was simply incompetent in business, he could easily ruin a well-off wife, leaving her bankrupt and with little or no recourse for redress.

In his *Rollwagenbüchlein* (published in 962 H/1555 CE), Jorg Wickman included a story of a man who, while drunk, committed his wife's property to a foolish agreement with the keeper of an inn where he drank. Although he had the legal right to do so, his wife was so upset by the deal that a fight broke out between the couple, ending with him killing his wife. The husband was found dead next to his wife the next day. It was assumed that he committed suicide based on the foul odor coming from his body, the likes of which did not emanate from his wife's corpse.[45]

The worsening position of women was sometimes even celebrated. In 462 H/1070 CE, a Flemish noblewoman named Godelieve was in an abusive marriage, where her husband and his family imprisoned and starved her. She escaped and returned to her father's house, but the local bishops declared that the marriage could not be dissolved. She was ordered to return to her husband's house, which she dutifully accepted. Shortly after her return, she was killed by her husband. Godelieve was celebrated and declared a saint for her meek forbearance and acceptance of her husband's abuse as a Christian duty. Her husband later admitted to the killing, but was granted absolution by the pope and later became a monk.

---

[44] Mark 10:6-9

[45] Alber Classen and Marilyn Sandidge, *The Power of a Woman's Voice in Medieval and Early Modern Literatures: New Approaches to German and European Women Writers and to Violence Against Women in Premodern Times*

The legal rights of European women generally worsened until the emergence of feminism. During this process, many women fought a losing battle to maintain some of their rights. After daughters in England were denied the right to inherit in absence of a male heir, records of court disputes show cases of uncles attempting, sometimes successfully, to deprive women of their fathers' inheritance.[46]

There were regional differences in the extent to which women were able to exercise rights. French and British law were among the more repressive legal systems, and these systems eventually became more influential and prominent worldwide due to the reach of the British and French empires. Both British and French laws prevented women from taking any decisions related to immovable property without her husband's consent, even if she had owned the property before marriage. Many of these laws remained in effect until well into the modern era, giving impetus to the feminist movement.

The Rise and Decline of Convents

Convents, also known as nunneries, were religious retreats where women dedicated themselves to prayer and contemplation. They were an important refuge for women and a bastion of female political and economic power throughout the history of Christian Europe. Like all other institutions that provided rights and power to women, they were gradually broken down with time, leaving women in an ever worsening condition. Consistent with most patterns of institutional reform during the feudal period, the decline of convents transferred power and influence from women to men and male-dominated institutions.

Many nunneries were made up of a few women living in humble country houses, but others governed sprawling estates with hundreds of residents and generated extensive incomes. The majority of convent residents hailed from noble families. If marriage was politically inexpedient, or if noble women were disinclined to marry and wanted to pursue a spiritual life,

---

[46] Deborah Anthony, *To Have, to Hold, and to Vanquish: Property and Inheritance in the History of Marriage and Surnames*

convents provided an outlet for their energies. By virtue of their connections with powerful families, nuns sometimes wielded considerable political influence.

In some cases, nuns filled the modern role of diplomats. Catherine of Siena, a nun who lived in the 7th/13th century H/CE, was deeply involved in matters of state. She was sent by the Pope to negotiate a peace treaty between the Papal States and Florence, and corresponded with Europe's nobility during a schism in which rival popes claimed the papacy. At one point she even called for a new Crusade. A number of important nobles and members of clergy responded positively to her call, although the crusade ultimately failed.

Female religious authority took different forms. In Northern Europe, orders of religious women developed, now referred to as Beguines. Beguines took vows of celibacy like nuns, but they kept their personal property and were free to leave the lifestyle and marry at any time. They supported themselves primarily by working in the textile industry, and formed communities dedicated to preaching and caring for the poor and sick.

Convents also provided refuge to female political dissidents. For example, when Mechthild of Magdeburg faced ostracism for her open criticism of church officials in the 6th/12th century H/CE, she was granted asylum at a Cistercian nunnery in Helfta. This arrangement was possible because abbesses had absolute authority within the walls of convents. Since many convents were built on land bequeathed by noble families, they were outside the authority of bishops.

Convents served important academic roles, and many of the later educational institutions of Europe emerged from convents and monasteries. Hildegard of Bingen, the author of a number of significant works on theology and medicine in the 6th/12th century H/CE, is one of the most well known abbesses from this period. A number of convents were also involved in the transcription of religious texts. Nuns were sometimes responsible for the education of noble women who would go on to marry monarchs. During education, bonds between nuns and young noblewomen sometimes formed, providing an indirect avenue for female political influence. Nuns also played an important role in the medical system by growing medicinal herbs and providing medical care and welfare services.

Convents also acted as a kind of financial institution. A number of convents were involved in financing and developing enterprises, including leasing and managing agricultural land and investing in manufacturing. Wealthy families would save a dowry for the marriage of their daughters, but if a woman entered a convent, her dowry would be given to the convent and invested. Dividends from the investment would pay for her expenses for the rest of her life.

Many convents financed themselves by producing textiles and food products which were sold in the local community. In the early modern period, music came to play an increasingly prominent role in religious services, and many convents were involved in the composition and performance of music, which was seen as a way to increase attendance to church services, and increase revenue via donations.

If we view convents through the lens of modern economic thought, we can see that nuns, like women in traditional societies, possessed a significant ownership and control in sectors of the economy as diverse as agriculture, education, food processing, medicine, pharmaceuticals, textiles, finance, publishing, art and entertainment. These resources were deployed in support of women, because convents mostly provided services to women. Women who, for whatever reason, did not have support from their families could live as residents of convents. It was common for widows to enter convents, and there is evidence that convents sometimes provided refuge to women fleeing highly abusive marriages.

As women's rights were increasingly restricted in the later phases of the feudal period, women could sometimes retain control over their property by dedicating it to a convent. Under coverture laws, a woman needed her husband's permission to sell or transfer ownership of her property. By making a bequest to a convent, women could retain some influence over their properties and continue to benefit from them without the risk of their husbands seizing them and using them in a manner against their will.

One of the earliest proto-feminist texts, *The Convent of Pleasure* by Margaret Cavendish, imagines a convent as a refuge where women lead an ideal existence free from the influence of men. American scholar, Emily James Putnam, said about the role of convents: "No institution in Europe has ever

won for the lady the freedom of development that she enjoyed in the convent in the early days."[47]

Records in Northern Europe show that new convents were founded much more frequently in the first centuries after the introduction of Christianity.[48] As time went on, more exclusively male monasteries were established relative to convents, until the number of new convents became a tiny fraction of the overall monastic movement. Why was it that the early days were so much better for women?

In the early days of Christianity, Christians were busy converting pagans. Women were among the most active supporters of the new religion, both ideologically and financially. They were thus natural allies for a Church seeking to make inroads into pagan territories. In other words, in the early days, Christianity could grow by means of interaction with a pagan "other." Since Christianity was rapidly growing, there was also little competition for authority between monks and nuns. As the whole of Europe adopted Christianity, however, resource competition increased, and preference was given to institutions managed by men. The Church and monastic orders were also no longer able to grow by means of converting pagans, so they had to seek a different "other."

There was also a general decline in religiosity over the centuries. In many aspects of religious life, corruption and abuse of power crept into the church over time. As more self-interested and materialistic individuals entered the clergy, convents were an easy target for grabbing land and power. A number of convents were shut down on the basis of accusations of adultery or prostitution. While some of these accusations may have been true, in other cases they were highly suspect. The result of such charges was invariably the seizure of convent properties by monks. In one especially extreme case in the 5th/11th century H/CE, Godwin, the Earl of Essex, is reported to have sent an agent to seduce a number of nuns in order to accuse them of adultery and seize their estate for himself.

---

[47] Emily Putnam, *The Lady Abbess*, The Atlantic

[48] Jane Schulenberg, Women's Monastic Communities, 500-1100: Patterns of Expansion and Decline

Not all of the allegations of adultery were fabricated. Many people were attracted to the worldly advantages of belonging to convents, but found themself unable to endure the rigorous levels of self-denial required by the monastic lifestyle. Moral rules were sometimes harshly enforced— a Cistercian monk, Aelred of Rievaulx, narrated a story from an English monastery at Watton in 6th/12th century H/CE. A nun became pregnant from a male laborer working in the convent. Upon learning of her pregnancy, the other nuns restrained the man, forced the pregnant nun to castrate him, and then shoved the severed testicles into her mouth "still stinking with blood."[49]

Stories like these are extreme examples, but they illustrate the severity of this struggle against human desires. Although convents provided European women with some rights they could not obtain elsewhere, it also forced them to endure intense repression of their natural instincts. As time went on, convents were increasingly plagued by sex scandals. Women were subject to more repression, however, due to beliefs that women are innately more sensual and prone to adultery than men.

In 697 H/1298 CE, Pope Boniface VIII issued a papal decree ordering the cloistering of all nuns, which barred them from leaving their convents. In some cases, convents were completely closed and locked with three locks by male caretakers who would deliver food and supplies. The doors would only be opened on rare occasions, like the burial of a deceased nun. It is unclear if there were ulterior motives to the decree, but the decree severely curtailed the economic viability of convents since it prevented nuns from going out to engage in agriculture or trade. As a result, many rural convents became destitute and dissolved. Market share previously controlled by nuns went either to exclusively male monasteries or urban merchants and craftsmen.

Christians were trying to ascend to the level of Jesus— nuns saw themselves as brides of Jesus, which meant that, in a way, their vows were a kind of marriage to God. This meant they needed to ascend to the level of godliness, which required transcending all worldly desires. This is yet another manifestation of the conceptual breakdown between the divine and the human, which ultimately placed impossible expectations on nuns. The failure of many nuns to live up to these impossible expectations was used as a pretext

[49] Brian Golding, *Gilbert of Sempringham and the Gilbertine Order*

by male clergy to seize the wealth of convents for themselves. To some extent, the aggressive expressions of female sexuality sometimes seen under modern feminism may be a backlash from this excessive repression and the historical trauma that went along with it.

Concentration of Power

By the 9th century H/16th century CE, Church reforms had reshaped the demographic landscape of Europe. Large extended families were relatively rare, women typically married in their mid to late twenties rather than teens, and overall fertility rates were dropping. Many of the functions of families, such as education, land management, and production, were taken over by the Church and other Christian institutions, and women were systematically excluded from these institutions.

Men were better equipped to survive and thrive in an increasingly individualistic society. It was not only legal privileges that gave them an advantage, but also physical strength. For example, men were able to work as traveling merchants or traders and cope with issues like bandits and wild animals. Women, on the other hand, were easier targets for robbery or sexual assault. Shrinking family sizes thus disproportionately harmed women.

As European families grew weaker and smaller, they were replaced with increasingly centralized institutions. This reversed a trend of political decentralization which began with the decline of Rome and the rise of Christianity. Centralization of economic and political power in the hands of the clergy took place partly at the expense of women— the new "other."

The transfer of wealth, productive capacity, and authority from households to increasingly centralized institutions was a process that had clear winners and losers. The winners were the clergy, male aristocrats, and exclusively male guilds, while the family and women lost power and influence. As power became more concentrated in the hands of male dominated institutions, the potential for abuse and exploitation of women increased.

Women were not the only ones subject to abuse as power in Europe concentrated. Society at large also experienced many abuses at the hands of an increasingly corrupt clergy and aristocracy. These abuses would eventually

push Europeans to embrace a radical redistribution of power; the first manifestation of this was Protestantism challenging the clergy's monopoly on scriptural interpretation. This was a key to enabling the rise of feminism, as it allowed for free circulation of doctrines previously viewed as heretical. These doctrines would pave the way for secularism (which redistributed the power of the clergy), democracy (which redistributed the power of the aristocracy), and feminism (which redistributed the power of men).

While it appears that Protestantism countered many of the processes of social transformation associated with the Church, in many ways, they continued. Centralization of political power at the expense of families continued under secularism, but the State rather than the Church became the main beneficiary of this process. This process was central to the rise of feminism, because it was the decline of the family as a protective factor that forced women to seek protections elsewhere. Ironically, feminism also eventually became part of the continuing degradation of the family; women were thus able to obtain some rights by joining the same process that had originally deprived them of their rights.

There are clear links between Christian theology and the historical tendency to undermine the role of families and women. In adopting an unmarried man as the literal image of God, society became increasingly hostile to both women and family. This laid the foundations for unprecedented levels of concentration of power at the expense of women and family. Feminism eventually alleviated some of the suffering of women by integrating them into this process. They would not regain the power they had held within economically productive families, but they would obtain roles in private industry and government. This led to a further decline in the importance of families, and further increases in the power of large, centralized institutions.

While Church doctrines began the process of breaking down the family, the centralization of power would eventually outgrow Christian moral frameworks. Christianity contained many elements that were protective of families, including the prohibition on fornication and adultery. To continue the individualizing society and building up centralized institutions at the expense of the family, it was necessary to break away from these moral prescriptions. This brings us to the next phase of our story — the Protestant Reformation

Chapter 4

The Protestant Reformation

The Protestant Reformation was a key precursor for the development of feminism. Early Christians viewed the condition of the world, including the gendered division of labor, as an expression of God's will. To suggest that this order should change would be a clear heresy— it would mean challenging the perfection of God's plan.

Catholicism viewed the hierarchy of earthly authority as an expression of divine will. The pope and clergy legitimated rulers and subjects were obliged to obey these rulers. Wives were obliged to obey their husbands, and children were obliged to obey their parents. If the Church's belief system held the social hierarchy as an expression of God's will, failures of the social hierarchy would weaken people's faith in God. Rejecting an increasingly corrupt clergy and ruling class was not only a matter of pursuing material interests— it was also a matter of faith.

The first step of the Reformation was rejecting the authority of the aristocracy and clergy, but rejecting one part of Catholicism's social hierarchy would open the door to rejecting other parts; including the authority of men over their wives. The entire social order of Europe was based upon faith. Initially, concentration of power was much less of a problem, because pious individuals feared the punishment of God if they were to abuse their power. As faith declined, however, willingness to abuse power increased.

There is a vicious cycle at play here. The image of God as a human male would demand that men have ever more power. Yet, the more power men have, the more temptation there is to abuse their power. Abuses of power, however, cause people to lose faith in the idea of a divinely ordained hierarchy. As people lose faith, they also become more willing to abuse positions of power, leading to a further general decline in faith, and thus further abuses of power.

Whether the Reformation improved the condition of women or not is a subject of debate by historians. In any case, gender relations during and

immediately after the Reformation were still nowhere near a "breaking point." Women still had substantial ownership over the economy. Childbearing and child rearing, and thus marriage, were still universal economic necessities. Although Protestantism may have intensified the theological degradation of women in some ways, their importance and value in the pre-modern economic and social order was inescapable.

More important than the overturning of the social hierarchies which had ruled Europe for centuries was a new concept of the purpose of life; specifically, the idea of "progress." For most of Christianity's history, no one thought that improving the human condition played any role in attaining salvation. The idea that humans should be agents in improving God's creation would have far reaching implications. In many ways, feminism was a product of this new belief system, but with time, it would also come to be an important tool in pursuing a vision of universal progress.

Protestantism and Individualism

Although the Catholic Church had made European society more individualistic, it still represented a highly collectivistic mode of organization. Individuals without proper training were not seen as capable of understanding or interpreting scripture. This meant that educated clergy acted as gatekeepers to salvation. Protestantism strongly rejected this paradigm, arguing that the door to salvation was directly accessible to every individual. This idea is well exemplified by a quote which has been attributed to Martin Luther. Just before his famous address to Catholic authorities at Worms in 927 H/1521 CE, where he presented his doctrine of salvation by faith alone, someone asked Luther if he was afraid. He reportedly replied:

> I am more afraid of my own heart than of the pope and all his cardinals. I have within me the great pope, Self.[50]

[50] Charles Swindoll, *Laugh Again*

It is uncertain if Luther really ever said these words, but this statement encapsulates much of his teaching as well as the social transformation that would come about as a result of the Reformation. Protestantism no longer located ultimate spiritual authority in Rome, but rather within the heart of each individual believer.

The idea of papal infallibility was the culmination of a tendency to assign divine authority to the clergy. Granting this level of authority brought great potential for abuse of power, and Luther's criticism focused largely on these abuses. In a debate with Johan Eck in Leipzig in 925 H/1519 CE , Luther stated:

> A simple layman armed with Scripture is to be believed above a pope or a council without it. As for the pope's decretal on indulgences[51] I say neither the Church nor the pope can establish articles of faith. These must come from Scripture. For the sake of Scripture we should reject the pope and councils.

Luther was not rejecting the idea that a human could possess divine authority; rather, he was challenging the clergy's monopoly on that authority. He viewed this authority as being accessible to every believing Christian by way of scripture. This was essentially a revival or a reinterpretation of the doctrine of equality of souls, a belief that would eventually lead to the rise of many aspects of liberalism, including democracy, the abolition of slavery, and the emergence of the movement for women's rights.

If authority was conceived as residing in the individual rather than the pope and clergy, the clergy would no longer have the right to legitimate rulers— instead, that right would belong to individuals. If all humans were equal before God, then how could some have the right to own and enslave others? If women too were able to understand and interpret scripture, why should they have less authority than men?

Conventional histories portray Luther as an important agent in shaping the development of the West, but from the broad historical

[51] Indulgences were a practice whereby Church officials accepted monetary payments in exchange for declaring sins as forgiven. This practice was one of the main targets of Luther's critique of Church authorities.

perspective of individualization that began with the Church breaking down the role of the extended family, he was carried on the currents of history more than he directed them. Under the influence of the Church, individualism in Europe had been on the rise for centuries. Protestantism was a continuation and an intensification of this process. Conceptually, modern feminism depends heavily on individualism, because most forms of feminism emphasize the need to affirm women's independence from men.

The trend of individualization would also later shape new forms of economic organization. More individualistic societies would share less, generating more consumer demand. Strong demand would drive colonial expansionism, higher levels of production, and greater efficiency via economy of scale. These changes would become a driving force behind feminism. Women's rights would eventually become a justification for colonialism; industrialization would strip women of much of their economic power as producers of consumer goods; and women's liberation would become integral to consumerism by leveraging the power of sexuality to generate economic growth.

The individualistic tendencies which consolidated under Protestantism were thus fundamental not only to the ideological foundation of feminism, but also to the practical economic transformations that would depend on feminism, and upon which feminism would depend.

Decline in Feminine Conceptions of Divinity and Further Pressure on Convents

The Reformation brought a major change in the perception of divinity. In Catholicism, Mary, the mother of Jesus, is revered as the "mother of God." In the "Hail Mary," one of the most important Catholic prayers, worshippers request intercession from Mary, implying that she has some kind of omniscience and special power, and can hear the prayers of supplicants wherever they are located.

Luther viewed such prayers, as well as veneration of statues and images of Mary, as a kind of idolatry. As Protestant influence spread across

Europe, the veneration of Mary declined or disappeared in many regions. This removed a major avenue of honoring the feminine from popular consciousness. The earliest religious artifacts found in Europe are figures of the feminine form, so the veneration of feminine deities or symbols was an ancient and deeply seated tradition. The symbolic importance of the feminine was perhaps only fully broken with Protestantism.

The Christian worldview had already conflated the human with the divine, but veneration of Mary included women in this schema to some extent. The Protestant assault on the institution of seeking intercession from Mary and other female saints definitively removed women from conceptions of the divine. At the same time, supplication to Jesus continued among Protestants. While convents were already in decline, Protestants almost entirely abolished them.

Irish Catholic reverend Edward Cahill lamented this process:

> The prestige of the woman suffered an incalculable disaster by the abolition under Protestantism of the veneration and cult of the Mother of God. With the disappearance of conventual life women were again shut out from a recognized status in social life outside the married state which the religious life had previously afforded them[.] ... The attitude of the husband towards the wife naturally tended, once the Church's authority was removed ... to return to the pagan ideal of a master and an owner, rather than a loving friend, companion and protector. Clear evidences of the sad deterioration of the woman's prestige can be seen in the English literature of the 17th and 18th centuries, when the withering effects of Protestantism on social life had begun to be felt in full. The chivalrous regard and respect for [women] ... reflected from the peerless glory of the Queen of Heaven disappeared from the English literature[.] ... The woman was now again valued only for her sex; and the one who did not, or had ceased to, exercise sex attraction was too often made the target of coarse jest so repulsive to the truly Christian mind.

During the dissolution of monasteries and convents in England beginning in 942 H/1536 CE, monks and nuns supported a rebellion which threatened the monarchy. Through a combination of force and negotiation, these rebellions were suppressed. In order to convince the monks and nuns to give up their positions, many were offered pensions. Monks typically received annual pensions of around £5, while nuns received closer to £1. Nuns were banned from marrying after leaving the convents. Unable to support themselves on their small pensions, many were forced to return to their families. Many of these women were viewed as a burden by their families and subsequently abused.

It was not only nuns themselves who were affected by the end of convents, but also some lay female servants. Convents provided all-female workplaces for many peasant women who became destitute after the dissolution. These women were often from marginalized segments of society and thus more vulnerable to abuse working under male employers.

Protestantism thus eliminated much of the conceptual respect and institutional protection that women had under Catholicism. This opened the door for even more virulent forms of misogyny, and left more and more women with no escape from unhappy family situations.

Medicine, Power, and Witch Hunts

Throughout history, medicine has been an important domain of female authority. In ancient Egypt, Isis was revered as the goddess of medicine, and her priestesses acted as high-ranking physicians. Likewise, in Greece, female priests would prescribe treatments to the sick in temples. In ancient Rome, women practiced medicine and had a status similar to that of male doctors. This dynamic is still visible in many indigenous societies today; female herbalists hold high status in society by virtue of their knowledge of medicine and pharmacology.

As with most cultures, folk medicine in Europe was linked to religious beliefs, many of which had pagan origins. The division between medicine, magic, and superstition was often unclear. Protestants made great efforts to purge Christianity from vestiges of pagan beliefs and rituals that had been

tolerated under Catholicism. One of the most famous examples of this trend was European witch hunts, a dramatic series of executions that peaked around 988 H/1580 CE to 1029 H/1620 CE, and mainly targeted women.

Traditional female medical practitioners in Europe were called "wise women," and Martin Luther specifically singled them out for attack:

> Concerning the female sorcerer. Roman law also prescribes this. Why does the law name women more than men here, even though men are also guilty of this? Because women are more susceptible to those superstitions of Satan; take Eve, for example. They are commonly called "wise women." Let them be killed.[52]

It is unclear exactly how many of the women killed during the witch hunts actually practiced medicine, but modern scholarship has confirmed that a large number of those accused were indeed traditional folk medical practitioners.[53] By the time Protestantism became the dominant ideology in Northern Europe, there appear to have been few female medical professionals remaining. Along with the decline of convents, this helped lay the groundwork for the modern medical system which was initially monopolized by men, and which emerged mainly in Protestant countries.

A proverb states, "knowledge is power." The decline of female participation in medicine, caused partly by mass killing, removed an important avenue for traditional female education. Along with the decline of convents, this contributed to the general worsening of the condition of Western women in terms of knowledge, their ability to make professional contributions to their communities, and their overall position in society. This would have left women increasingly devalued and vulnerable to abuse.

The Wars of the Reformation

---

[52] Susan C. Karant-Nunn, *Luther on Women: A Sourcebook.*

[53] Richard A. Horsley, *Who Were the Witches? The Social Roles of the Accused in the European Witch Trials .*

Conflicts between Catholics and Protestants resulted in many severe wars, which had a profound effect on the European collective psyche. The wars of the Reformation brought unusually high levels of violence and death. In some areas of the Holy Roman Empire, as many as 20-30% of the population were killed. According to most historians, these death rates are among the highest in world history, with only the Mongol invasions reaching a similar fatality rate. The intensity of this violence would contribute to the development of feminist ideology in a number of ways.

For one, religiously motivated violence caused many to question Christianity and religion in general as a basis for government. This opened the door for legal reforms that contradicted Christian principles, including laws governing women and marriage.

The trauma of these wars also led to a rise in the popularity of pacifist scriptural interpretations and ideologies. Early on, this manifested in the form of Protestant beliefs about a golden age of peace and prosperity on earth. Many such interpretations were based on Biblical verses describing a thousand years of peace and prosperity before the second coming of Jesus. This trend of Biblical interpretation is often called "millenarianism."

These beliefs are inspired by Biblical passages, especially from the Book of Revelations:

> And I saw an angel coming down out of heaven, having the key to the Abyss and holding in his hand a great chain. He seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil, or Satan, and bound him for a thousand years. He threw him into the Abyss, and locked and sealed it over him, to keep him from deceiving the nations anymore until the thousand years were ended. After that, he must be set free for a short time.
>
> I saw thrones on which were seated those who had been given authority to judge. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony about Jesus and because of the word of God. They had not worshiped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years. This is the first resurrection.

> Blessed and holy are those who share in the first resurrection. The second death has no power over them, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with him for a thousand years.[54]

Catholic canon definitively rejected millenarian interpretations. The Catholic church's catechism reads:

> The Antichrist's deception already begins to take shape in the world every time the claim is made to realize within history that messianic hope which can only be realized beyond history through the eschatological judgment. The Church has rejected even modified forms of this falsification of the kingdom to come under the name of millenarianism, especially the 'intrinsically perverse' political form of a secular messianism.[55]

Many Christian groups held millenarian beliefs during the first centuries of Christianity, but these ideas fell out of favor with the rise of teachings of scholars like Augustine of Hippo. For most of Christian history, millenarian beliefs were suppressed as heresy. After the Reformation, millenarian ideas experienced a revival, and some Protestant denominations began to advocate them. The appeal of these ideas in the bleak context of the brutal religious wars shaking Europe is clear. It offered the people a compelling vision of a better future.

Some millenarians believed that the Messiah could only return once the earth had been purified of injustice and inequality, and that it was their responsibility to bring about this change. These beliefs later contributed to modern ideologies like secularism and democracy, and the belief that these ideologies could bring about peace on earth. For example, US president Woodrow Wilson, a major force behind the creation of the League of Nations (the predecessor of the United Nations) was a prominent millenarian.

The development of secularism was motivated by the hope that removing religion from politics could eliminate war, but marginalization of Christian morality also made it possible to break down religious principles

---

[54] Revelation, 20:1-6

[55] Catechism of the Catholic Church, Paragraph 676

that upheld traditional gender roles. The desire for peace, which can be understood partly as an expression of collective trauma from the wars of the Reformation, eventually pushed Europeans toward the idea that giving women more authority in the public sphere could reduce the incidence of war.

Today, the United Nations aggressively promotes feminist reforms and policies worldwide. These efforts are explicitly justified by the idea that gender equality is linked to lower levels of violence.[56] The idea that patriarchy is an innately harmful system and ought to be abolished, is thus very much a product of European history.

The Protestant Work Ethic

The Reformation laid the groundwork for the emergence of a new economic system which would have major repercussions for women. The Catholic Church had dominated economic activity in Europe for centuries, but after the Reformation, investment shifted toward secular projects, particularly in government administration.[57] In other words, the State emerged as an alternative to the Church.

State bureaucracies were based on a different set of values than the Catholic clergy. Under Catholicism, people directed their resources toward the Church, believing this was the only path to salvation. Protestantism saw the potential for salvation inside of every human. From this perspective, it made more sense to direct resources toward providing individuals with whatever they needed to attain salvation.

One of the most famous examples of this thinking was Protestantism's emphasis on universal education. The rise of Protestantism was thus dependent on resources to some extent; it is much more efficient to educate a specialized clergy that guides the laymen than to equip every individual with the ability to understand scripture and attain salvation on their own. In this dynamic, it's possible to see the seeds for European expansionism and the modern obsession with economic growth. If salvation

---

[56] Mary Caprioli and Valerie Hudson, *Sex and World Peace*

[57] Davide Cantoni, *Religious Competition and Reallocation: The Political Economy of Secularization in the Protestant Reformation*

required every individual to have education, and education required resources, then obtaining more resources took on great spiritual importance.

With the decline of monasticism, the ideal of devotion to God in isolation also declined. The spiritual ideal under Protestantism was instead to marry and lead a productive life embedded in a Christian community. This also had an economic dimension; praying in isolation did nothing to contribute to economic growth. In his famous and controversial book "The Protestant Work Ethic," sociologist Max Weber argued that Protestant theology was a major cause for increases in productivity and prosperity that established the modern world order. This thesis has been heavily criticized, but there can be no doubt that from a materialistic, causal perspective, work does produce more wealth than prayer.

Weber's thesis is likely correct insofar as there was a growing emphasis on material success as an indicator of spiritual salvation. In any case, there was certainly more emphasis on economic productivity as a sign of God's favor. Calvinist theology especially is known for its emphasis work, where fulfilling one's "calling" is an attribute of the saved. John Calvin wrote:

> The Lord bids each one of us in all life's actions to look to his calling. For He knows with what great restlessness human nature flames, with what fickleness it is borne hither and thither, how its ambition longs to embrace various things at once. Therefore, lest through our stupidity and rashness everything be turned topsy-turvy, He has appointed duties for every man in his particular way of life. And that no one may thoughtlessly transgress his limits, He has named these various kinds of living "callings." Therefore each individual has his own kind of living assigned to him by the Lord as a sort of sentry post so that he may not heedlessly wander throughout life.[58]

Protestants also demonized not working, popularizing sayings like: "Idle hands are the devil's workshop." It's not that Protestants were less devoted to God than Catholics; rather, they placed more emphasis on the idea of professional development as a domain of worship.

---

[58] John Calvin, Institutes, III.x.6.

The emphasis on economic activity was also practical; as more and more priests married and had children, more work was needed to maintain and raise families. Protestants saw this as an improvement over a system where lazy, obese priests lived off the donations of hard working people. It's easy to see how Protestantism arose as a response to corruption among the clergy, but it was nonetheless the beginning of a turn toward a more materialistic society.

These changes had some serious implications for women. Since men were more involved in direct productive activities, seeing productivity as a sign of spiritual advancement would reinforce the idea that women are spiritually inferior to men. Eventually, the emphasis on productivity would also lead to more efficient and centralized industrial production owned and controlled by men, undermining the role of the family as an economically productive unit.

Protestantism also contributed to a new paradigm of government and authority. In part, it was a rejection of the idea that the pope and the clergy had the power to legitimate rulers. Instead, Protestants rightly demanded that rulers serve the people. The corrupt clergy had used grand construction projects like cathedrals and golden, gem encrusted crucifixes to project authority. After the Reformation, however, every layman was seen as having just as much of a right to legitimate a ruler as the pope. Thus, the government's ability to serve and fulfill the needs of the people became the key to legitimacy. Legitimacy was obtained by the consent of the ruled, rather than the clergy's interpretation of scripture.

The more power states could concentrate, the more services they could provide to citizens, thus reinforcing their own legitimacy. States thus had every incentive to undermine political and economic power within families and to bring men and women into institutions entirely under their control. In other words, the State continued the Church's mission to assume divine authority by absorbing the power and authority of families.

By the dawn of the modern era, women had lost much of their influence on all levels of society. Aristocratic women had lost power through primogeniture and bureaucratization of government. The decline of convents deprived women of an important avenue for spiritual authority. The wives of urban merchants and craftsmen were increasingly marginalized by guilds and

large workshops, as opposed to home-based enterprises. Women lost land holdings through increasingly misogynistic marriage and inheritance laws. Even medical authority among the rural peasantry was decimated by the witch hunts and the rise of an all-male medical class. This left almost no options available to women for earning a livelihood except for marriage and low-paying domestic labor.

At a time when economic productivity was increasingly seen as a measure of spiritual value, the economic power of women was consistently declining and being co-opted by men. Women were ever more vulnerable to abuse, and increasingly degraded, both spiritually and in terms of worldly status. Protestantism did little to change the stigma on divorce, meaning women were still mostly unable to escape bad marriages. This situation resulted in a kind of historical trauma that continues to drive feminist discourse well into the modern era.

Feminism would eventually emerge as a solution to these problems. However, important theological and economic changes were still necessary before feminism could emerge. Theologically, Protestantism was still too strongly rooted in traditional Christian values to allow a radical restructuring of gender roles. Developing new gender roles would be very costly, and early modern Europe still depended heavily on a traditional gendered division of labor.

Protestantism contained many of the early precursors of feminism, both in terms of ideological changes and historical processes, but feminism would only truly become practical with much larger resource surpluses. Increasing focus on economic production would provide part of the necessary resource surplus, but this alone would not be enough. Eventually, colonialism, industrialization, and ultimately the monetization of feminine labor and sexuality would be necessary for the development of modern feminism. A moral framework which could enable these changes would be found in the "Age of Reason," which itself was influenced by the Protestant idea that every individual could know the will of God by means of their own minds.

Chapter 5

The Age of Colonialism and Reason

Most mainstream histories of feminism trace the modern women's rights movement back to the so-called "Enlightenment" or "Age of Reason." From a European perspective, a turn away from dogma and superstition and toward science and rationality defined this era. However, for the rest of the world, this period was defined by the expansion of European empires to nearly every corner of the earth.

Rationalistic philosophy that emerged at this time was indeed at the root of feminism, and neither the new rationalist worldview nor feminism were cheap. Cultivating rationalism required extensive costly education, and began first among wealthy elites. Thus, from an economic perspective, colonialism and "Enlightenment" philosophy (eventually including feminism) were very much intertwined. Colonies provided not only wealth for the construction of European civilization, but also an outlet for excess population, criminals, and political dissidents.

Although there was much theoretical talk about equality during this period, the actual social transformation that took place involved constructing a global hierarchy. At the top of this hierarchy were individuals that looked very much like the European image of God; ethnically European males. As the colonial order replaced the feudal order, it eventually brought opportunities for improvements to the condition of European women. The globalization of European civilization meant that there were new "others" to be exploited instead of European women, such as native Americans and Africans.

The new "Enlightenment" ideals were not only important for the West to escape the trauma of their past and pursue a vision of a better future. They were also functionally important for justifying a new world order. Protestant value systems and eschatologies gave rise to linear ideas about progress. Viewing European men as the pinnacle of progress came to be the main justification first for the colonization of the world, and eventually the "improvement" of women, with both processes further enriching and

empowering the men who most resembled the European image of God. Ultimately, feminism itself would become a very lucrative element of the moral justification for empire.

Replacing Revelation with Reason

The phrases "Enlightenment" and "Age of Reason" are used almost interchangeably to describe Europe's transition from an explicitly Christian order to a secular concept of governance. This terminology reflects the spirit of the times, which viewed human logic and reason as an absolute virtue. For example, in his Essay Concerning Human Understanding, published in 1100 H/1689 CE, John Locke writes:

> Reason is natural revelation, whereby the eternal Father of light and fountain of all knowledge, communicates to mankind that portion of truth which he has laid within the reach of their natural faculties: revelation is natural reason enlarged by a new set of discoveries communicated by God immediately; which reason vouches the truth of, by the testimony and proofs it gives that they come from God.[59]

This kind of thinking established a conceptual framework for placing the human intellect on equal footing with Biblical revelation. This exaltation of human reason would eventually lead to reducing the role of revelation in governance, and ultimately for rejecting revelation entirely, since many aspects of Christian scripture were illogical. Luther had opened the door to this transition by breaking the Church's monopoly on Biblical interpretation, but this turn of events was very far from what Luther would have wanted. Luther wrote:

> Reason is the Devil's greatest whore; by nature and manner of being she is a noxious whore; she is a prostitute, the Devil's appointed whore; whore eaten by scab and leprosy who ought to be trodden under foot

[59] John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding. Book 4, Chapter 19*

> and destroyed, she and her wisdom ... Throw dung in her face to make her ugly. She is and she ought to be drowned in baptism... She would deserve, the wretch, to be banished to the filthiest place in the house, to the closets.[60]

He expressed this hostility toward rationality on more than one occasion:

> But since the devil's bride, Reason, that pretty whore, comes in and thinks she's wise, and what she says, what she thinks, is from the Holy Spirit, who can help us, then? Not judges, not doctors, no king or emperor, because [reason] is the Devil's greatest whore.[61]

Luther's concern is valid. To put reason on the same level as revelation is to place men on the same level as God. This was not a difficult leap for Christians, since they had already spent centuries worshipping a god depicted as a human being.

The end of feudalism, in many ways, represented the failure of Christianity as a governmental paradigm in Western Europe. Europeans were fed up with a governmental paradigm that justified misery, suffering, and economic stagnation. As scholars searched for alternatives, a revival of interest in Greek and Roman texts swept through Europe. During this period, new energy sources also appeared, including technological innovations introduced from the Middle East (such as the windmill) and New World (such as the potato). Gold, silver, sugar and spice also began to flow into Europe from the colonies.

With energy availability not seen for centuries, energy-intensive political systems like that of the Roman republic and empire once again became viable. Empiricism and rationalism built upon foundations laid by Greek thinkers like Aristotle and Plato, and appeared to offer a cure to the still-fresh wounds of the religious wars that had rocked Europe. In stark

---

[60] Martin Luther, *Erlangen Edition* v. 16, pp. 142-148

[61] Martin Luther, Last Sermon in Wittenberg ... Second Sunday in Epiphany, 17 January 1546. *Dr. Martin Luthers Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe*

contrast to Luther, "Enlightenment" thinkers like Voltaire began to view religion as darkness and superstition, and reason as a guiding light.

When it comes to understanding the origins of feminism, an important point to recognize about the "Age of Reason" is that rationality has historically been considered a typically male trait. Modern feminist researchers have tried hard to disprove that there is any physiological basis for gender differences in logical reasoning ability, and standardized education for girls and boys has narrowed gaps that appear on standardized tests. Still, differences persist, with the average performance of men on analytical tasks exceeding that of women in a number of trials.

Even after decades of feminist programs and reforms, men are still much more likely to study or work in highly logical and analytical fields such as engineering, while women are more likely to choose careers in fields requiring more social intelligence and empathy, like psychology or social work. This is consistent with patterns of women performing better than men on tasks requiring social intelligence and empathy.

Regardless of to what extent rationality is more prominent in men, and whether it has a biological basis or stems from socialization, the fact remains that it was an attribute associated with men at the time it was exalted to divine status. The new supremacy of reason thus represented a further degradation of the value of women and femininity. This is consistent with the image of the human male as God.

The first major feminist author, Mary Wollstonecraft, wrote on the topic of reason, fervently advocating that women needed to become more rational. In her Vindication of the Rights of Women, published in 1206 H/1792 CE, she writes:

> Reason is, consequentially, the simple power of improvement; or, more properly speaking, of discerning truth. Every individual is in this respect a world in itself. More or less may be conspicuous in one being than other; but the nature of reason must be the same in all, if it be an emanation of divinity, the tie that connects the creature with the

> Creator; for, can that soul be stamped with the heavenly image, that is not perfected by the exercise of its own reason?[62]

This passage demonstrates an internal crisis of the new theology of reason. If salvation was no longer obtained through obedience to the clergy, but rather through independent reasoning, it would mean that men have a distinct spiritual advantage over women. If reason was essential for knowing God and God's will, then women were necessarily spiritually inferior.

It followed from the conclusion that cultivating rationality in women was a matter of great spiritual importance. Wollstonecraft was among the first to advocate this:

> ...from every quarter have I heard exclamations against masculine women; but where are they to be found? If, by this appellation, men mean to inveigh against their ardour in hunting, shooting, and gaming, I shall most cordially join in the cry; but if it be, against the imitation of manly virtues, or, more properly speaking, the attainment of those talents and virtues, the exercise of which ennobles the human character, and which raise females in the scale of animal being, when they are comprehensively termed mankind—all those who view them with a philosophical eye must, I should think, wish with me, that they may every day grow more and more masculine.[63]

This points to a fundamental problem with the idea of equal rights for women, and human rights in general. In every social system, rights come along with responsibilities. If all humans have equal rights, it follows that they must have equal responsibilities. Equal responsibilities, however, demand equal ability. To this end, Wollstonecraft argued that education for men and women be identical.

This premise is innately linked to colonialism for the simple reason that cultivating reasoning ability costs money. As Wollstonecraft rightly observed, women can be more rational (even if they are less biologically or

---

[62] Mary Wollstonecraft, *Vindication of the Rights of Women*
[63] ibid.

socially inclined to it) given proper training. Wollstonecraft was only able to imagine universal and equal education for boys and girls because of the wealth surpluses accumulating in Europe as a result of colonialism.

Progress as Worship

The doctrine of original sin holds that all humans are vessels of evil from birth, and that achieving redemption and salvation is only possible through the mercy of God manifest in Jesus' suffering and death on the cross. This worldview does not leave much room for the idea that humans could or should try to eliminate suffering. Rather, enduring suffering is part of emulating Jesus and attaining salvation.

Equating reason to revelation changes all that. Viewing human reason as a window to the divine, it becomes plausible that divine grace could manifest through human efforts and ingenuity. Humans need not wait for the afterlife for relief from suffering; salvation could come from their own minds.

The idea that reason is an expression of divinity (or that it enables communication with divine will) threatened all kinds of hierarchies. In essence, it meant that human beings could become partners with God in changing and improving creation. Previously, the position of lords above peasants and men above women was considered part of a permanent, immutable order. Elevating human reason to the status of divinity opened the conceptual door to reorganizing the natural order under the banner of improving things.

This theological shift addressed a real political need. The clergy were distorting scripture for the sake of material gain, and aristocrats were indulging in luxury while their subjects starved. The clergy were not only threatening the worldly wellbeing of the laity; by distorting and misrepresenting scripture, they were also endangering the eternal lives of the masses. Elevating the status of human reason was an effective way to redistribute power to the masses.

Around this time, an obsession with the idea of "progress" took hold of European consciousness. Christians were understandably fed up with corrupt and hedonistic overlords telling them to accept suffering and

stagnation. In this climate, a theology that taught that improving the human condition and eliminating suffering was God's will was welcomed enthusiastically. Historian Moses Finley writes:

> We must remind ourselves time and again that the European experience since the late Middle Ages in technology, in the economy, and in the value systems that accompanied them, was unique in human history until the recent export trend commenced. Technical progress, economic growth, productivity, even efficiency have not been significant goals since the beginning of time. So long as an acceptable life-style could be maintained, however that was defined, other values held the stage.[64]

The newfound interest in improving the human condition and the world in general had serious implications for women. As Wollstonecraft observed, some Western concepts of virtue (consistent with the legacy of Christian theology) were innately masculine. The belief that women were deficient demanded their improvement. "Improving" women by imbuing them with attributes of masculine virtue eventually became a key part of the general mission of "progress" — the ideal of worship and the main purpose of human existence in the emerging modern paradigm.

The idea of progress had strong Biblical roots; the surge in millenarianism was part of this. Although the early modern period saw a resurgence in interest in Greco-Roman paganism, pagan concepts of time were generally cyclical. This is consistent with a worldview that conflates the divine and the material— if the divine is material, then the material is eternal. In this worldview, existence is a continuous process of death and rebirth, with no particular final objective or end. Such a theology could never conceive human existence as a grand march of progress.

Christianity universalized the idea of a final judgment, which places God above all temporal phenomena and affirms that time has an end point. This enables a linear and progressive view of history, where all historical movement is leading toward completion, fulfillment or culmination. With

---

[64] Moses Finley, *The Ancient Economy*

such a worldview, people can more easily understand themselves as part of a grand cosmic process with a defined end goal. With colonial wealth surpluses, it was possible to develop new technologies and social structures. As these changes shook Europe, they fed into an emerging theology of progress.

Hierarchies reflect a society's priorities. Under Catholicism, priests were at the top of the hierarchy because the main focus of society was to achieve salvation in the afterlife. With the rise of the ideal of progress, scientists, doctors, and engineers became more esteemed than priests, because they served the universal mission of the new theology.

The new obsession with material progress as part of a divine mission initially did nothing to improve the condition of European women. Men were generally much more involved in technological and social development, and women had been systematically pushed out of positions of influence for centuries. A new theology that defined material progress as the purpose of life would further reinforce the idea that women are inferior— unless women were incorporated into the process of universal progress.

This ideal of linear progress was also functionally important for constructing the colonial world order. Nations, like individuals, would be ranked according to their contribution to "progress." Non-European nations, like women, were less advanced on the hierarchy, and in need of "improvement," as Wollstonecraft put it.

Like so many of the radical social changes of this period, this new hierarchy was a backlash against the iniquities of the previous Christian order. The Church had indeed been holding back human potential— lazy, obese clergy and brutal, extravagant aristocrats had pursued vain and wasteful pursuits at the expense of peasants and artisans. There was little to no social mobility, and thus no incentive to innovate or strive for betterment of oneself and community. Rejecting a theology that justified this stagnation and misery was only natural.

The theology of progress was also a backlash against the monastic ideal of worship in isolation. The trauma of parasitic priests and monks led to an emphasis on community service.

Feminism would eventually become both an objective of the theology of progress, and a tool for advancing it. "Improving" women by instilling them with masculine virtue would become part of the new ideal of salvation.

Bringing them out of traditional family settings and into the formal labor force would power the ideals of economic growth and technological development. All of this would advance the general principle of molding society in the image of the human, male god— as humanity became more technologically and economically powerful, they would grow closer to the idea of a human image of omnipotence and omniscience. And as women came to embody masculine virtue, they too would grow closer to realizing the image of the male god.

Liberty and Profit

The idea of progress is closely linked to the idea of liberty, and feminism is closely linked to both the ideas of liberty and progress. The terms "feminism" and "women's liberation" are often used interchangeably. During the "Age of Reason," intellectuals came to view the Church as a retrograde force holding back human understanding and improvement. The conflict between Galileo and Church authorities is one of the most iconic stories about this dynamic.

Thus, "Enlightenment" thinkers came to associate liberation from Church doctrines with scientific and economic progress. But the idea of "liberty" also had a religious basis. From the Protestant perspective, forcing an incorrect theological interpretation onto the masses meant that the people were being forced into eternal damnation. Religious freedom meant that individuals could *freely* interpret scripture for themselves and seek the truth. Any centralized religious authority would open the door to abuses of power again. From this perspective, secularism was a way to give every individual a fair chance at salvation.

Rationalists also had a vision of spiritual progress, and liberty was central to this vision. If the human intellect was understood as a window to God's will, the free exercise of reason was necessary for knowing God. Since the power of reason can be cultivated by exercising rational thought, freedom to use reason was necessary for human spiritual progress.

In one of the most famous and influential essays from this period, *What is Enlightenment*, published in 1198 H/1784 CE, Immanuel Kant expressed this sentiment:

> This enlightenment requires nothing but freedom—and the most innocent of all that may be called "freedom": freedom to make public use of one's reason in all matters.[65]

The love of freedom has deeper origins in European intellectual history— it was one of the defining characteristics by which the ancient Greeks differentiated themselves from what they termed the "barbarians," a word used to designate all non-Greeks. For the Greeks, the idea of freedom was closely bound to democracy, while those living under despotism were regarded as inferior. The new European theology reflected this ideal; democratic, Western societies represented a higher stage of development on the linear hierarchy of universal progress. Liberation of women, along with democracy, soon came to represent a key dimension of freedom.

Renewed interest in Greco-Roman ideals combined with the historical trauma of Church repression enshrined liberty as one of the sacred goals of the new theology of progress. Depictions of Liberty as a human woman started to appear during the "Age of Reason"— one of the most famous such depictions is the American Statue of Liberty. These depictions were based upon statues and inscriptions of the Roman goddess, Libertas.

The style of these depictions was a premonition of emerging feminist ideals. In contrast to the modest, humble, and compassionate iconography of Mother Mary, "Enlightenment" artists portrayed Liberty as a powerful, bold (and in many cases partially nude) figure. The aesthetic of the brave, powerful woman would later become an important part of feminist imagery.

The image of liberty as a beautiful, partially naked woman was understandably popular in a culture that had endured centuries of extreme sexual repression. In contrast to Catholic doctrines that commanded the oppressed to tolerate oppression and misery with patience, the new theology held that God wanted humans to be happy. The idea of progress and liberty were strongly linked to human happiness in this new paradigm. John Locke writes:

---

[65] Immanuel Kant, What is Enlightenment

> "The necessity of pursuing happiness [is] the foundation of liberty. As therefore the highest perfection of intellectual nature lies in a careful and constant pursuit of true and solid happiness; so the care of ourselves, that we mistake not imaginary for real happiness, is the necessary foundation of our liberty. The stronger ties we have to an unalterable pursuit of happiness in general, which is our greatest good, and which, as such, our desires always follow, the more are we free from any necessary determination of our will to any particular action..."[66]

The ancient Greeks had seen themselves as superior to others because of their freedom, but freedom was reserved for citizens, and it was not cheap. It depended on an economy where slaves toiled so as to allow freemen to philosophize and engage in political debates. Likewise, the modern emergence of democracy (including effective participation of women) would require a large slave class in the colonies to provide for newly democratic states.

The emergence of democracy in Christian cultures had a different theological character than ancient Greek democracy. It was shaped by a belief that human logic could be a gateway to understanding the will of an absolute and universal God. Thus, freedom to debate and discuss different ideas and to train the capacity for rational thought became essential to a new concept of salvation.

This new, democratized, and individualistic view of salvation was the origin of the obsession with economic growth, but it also appealed to sensual desire. Therein lies the power of this model; it appeals to both the sincere believer and the wicked hypocrite. It presents a vision of salvation that does not require waiting for the afterlife; the fruits of freedom are immediately available in the form of increased economic production and consumption. The believer hopes for reward in the afterlife for improving the human condition, while the disbeliever or hypocrite has access to more sensual enjoyment in this world.

---

[66] John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*

Women would play a very important role in the new nexus of progress, liberation, happiness, and economic growth. From a theological perspective, "liberating" women by training them in rational thought was essential for this idea of salvation, and Protestantism increased female literacy more than perhaps any social movement in history. At the same time, formal education for women lead to more economic growth.

John Stuart Mill, who was also a proponent of the idea of individual liberty, wrote one of the most important early feminist works, "The Subjection of Women," published in 1285 H/1869 CE. Mill was visionary insofar as he understood that achieving the goal of maximal economic growth would require discarding traditional gender roles. His argument for women's liberation revolves around the idea that giving women greater access to the formal labor market would increase economic output. Conceiving wealth and freedom as innate virtues is a mutually reinforcing belief system, since freedom can increase wealth, and wealth can increase freedom.

Abolishing many moral rules for the sake of profit can increase profits, at least in the short term. Prostitution and pornography are undeniably highly profitable, although they have many detrimental long term effects. Lifting moral restrictions opens many new avenues for profit, and many new ways to exploit women for profit. Once a society views economic growth as an essential virtue, its morality will be defined by what is profitable.

Mill envisioned women becoming more like men as a form of progress. He argued that women being "liberated" from traditional gender roles was necessary for humanity to reach its full potential. As with Wollstonecraft's argument that women should become more masculine in terms of rationality, Mill actually advocated that women pursue the same careers as men.

Both of these arguments are consistent with the legacy of Christian theology. Those attributes and achievements regarded as typically male, such as rationality and high economic output, were exalted and regarded as an expression of divine grace. Typically female qualities and contributions, such as intuition and providing emotional support and stability in the home, were devalued. This value system is visible even in the idea that women abandoning domestic chores was a kind of freedom. A woman's presence in the home can just as well be seen as protective rather than restrictive, and her labor on

behalf of her husband and children an act of love and noble sacrifice rather than meaningless drudgery.

The traditional domain of men was thus characterized as freedom and light, and the domain of women as bondage and darkness. This worldview echoes the doctrine of original sin, which views women as the downfall and ruin of humanity. The salvation of women, and all of humanity, then, could be found in bringing women into the light of the domain of men. The historical trauma of horrific conditions for women in Europe also fed into the idea that traditional female gender roles were a prison from which women needed to escape.

Mill's argument is both highly materialistic and highly individualistic. It focuses not on the needs or the interests of families, but rather on the needs and interests of a mass of atomized individuals. It does not consider the effect of the absence of women from homes if they pursue traditionally male professions. The utilitarian worldview focuses on material gain rather than the emotional or psychological value of traditional female labor. It also fails to consider the harms that women working outside the home might bring, such as increased rates of sexual harassment, divorce, and lower fertility.

"Liberation" from traditional female roles came at a price. The first "liberated" women came from the gentry, and so typically had female servants handling things like washing, cleaning, cooking, and childcare. For lower class women, leaving traditional female labor roles came first with the expansion of colonial empires and the development of an external slave class. Workers in the colonies provided commodities and raw materials that made mechanization possible, and mechanization took over much of the domestic labor, "freeing" women to pursue rationalistic education and careers in the formal labor market. As with Greek democracy, the modern vision of liberation depended on a large class of slaves, now in the colonies. A new form of slavery was the price of liberation.

Evolution and Gender

Some feminists eventually came to view female biology, pregnancy, and motherhood as a form of slavery from which women needed to be liberated. In her famous work, *The Second Sex*, Simone de Beauvoir writes about what she calls "reproductive slavery:"

> It is not possible to measure in the abstract the burden of the generative function for woman, just as it is not possible to measure her grasp on the world: the relation of maternity to individual life is naturally regulated in animals by the cycle of heat and seasons; it is undefined for woman; only society can decide; woman's enslavement to the species is tighter or looser depending on how many births the society demands and the hygienic conditions in which pregnancy and birth occur.

The practice of contraception started to gain traction at the same time that Europeans were starting to conceive freedom as a primary goal of human existence. It was during the so-called Age of Reason that Europeans developed condoms, the practice of coitus interruptus increased, and overall fertility rates began to decline.[67] In order to embrace the theology of progress, it was necessary to reject the past, and this rejection became so total that Europeans started to view even human biology as a form of slavery or oppression. This carries the implication that liberation could only be achieved by changing human biology on a fundamental level.

Interest in the idea of evolution is an inevitable consequence of the belief that human biology is flawed. The concept of evolution, which began to gain momentum with Rousseau and was formalized by Darwin, opened the door to the idea of actively modifying and improving human biology. When it came to gender, this meant that women could change to become more masculine (and therefore more godly) and to escape the limitations of their own biology, such as menstruation, childbirth, and childrearing. In a way, this

[67] For more on this, see "The Fertility Transition: Europe and the Third World Compared" by Susan Watkins.

was a means of escaping the Biblical curse which described birth pains as a punishment for Original Sin.

Before the Age of Reason, the idea of trying to improve human biology was considered blasphemy by Christian authorities. Even today, genetic engineering and biological enhancement are hot topics among traditionalist Christians. Whatever the objections some have to "playing God," these trends result from the theology of progress— improvement of the human condition demands improvement of the human. Since women were already seen as inferior, they required extra attention when it came to the civilizational mission of improvement and progress.

This is consistent with the general concept of linear progress. A perspective which is both evolutionary and progressive will view the original state of humanity as uncultivated, undeveloped, and inferior. P Progress, in the form of agriculture and urbanization, was achieved through the destruction of natural ecosystems and replacing them with human made structures and biomes. The focus on liberation as an absolute virtue came to view not only religious rules as oppressive, but also natural ecosystems. Liberation and progress was achieved by cutting down forests and converting them into farmland, domesticating wild animals, and diverting water sources to increase production.

This view of the historical development of civilization corresponded to the emerging theory of evolution; humanity had begun as single cell organisms, and later progressed to various sea creatures. Sea creatures developed the ability to walk on land, and become dinosaurs and birds, before finally becoming rodents, then primates, and then humans. Humans began as small tribes and coalesced into civilizations, of which European civilization was the greatest and most advanced.

This is the origin myth of the theology of progress. All development, including evolution, is a continuous striving toward more power and complexity. Along with this worldview came a new system of morality; anything that increased human power was good, and whatever hindered its expansion was evil. Just as men had changed and transformed their natural environment, optimizing it to increase production, women represented another frontier to be transformed and optimized to increase production and economic growth.

The impact of evolution is yet another echo of the image of a human god. Evolution made it possible for humans to see themselves as the architects of an ongoing process of creation. This thought culminated in the eugenics movement, which for a time was closely connected to the feminist movement. One of the major areas of overlap between the two movements was their advocacy for contraception and abortion.

Early feminist Margaret Sanger, the founder of the American birth control and abortion agency "Planned Parenthood," vocally advocated birth control as a tool for eugenics:

> Birth control, which has been criticized as negative and destructive, is really the greatest and most truly eugenic method, and its adoption as part of the program of Eugenics would immediately give a concrete and realistic power to that science. As a matter of fact, Birth Control has been accepted by the most clear thinking and far seeing of the Eugenists themselves as the most constructive and necessary of the means to racial health.

Feminists and eugenicists were natural allies, since they both had a strong interest in researching and developing contraception methods. Eugenicists wanted this to eliminate undesirable traits from humanity, while feminists were interested in reducing women's dependence on men by enabling women to lead active professional and sexual lives without the disruptive effects of pregnancy and childbirth. Both shared a vision of radically reshaping humanity into something better.

Eugenics fell out of intellectual favor after the Second World War, but the influence of evolutionary thought has persisted, including ideas about improving gender roles. Some feminists view human history and patriarchy as a lower stage of evolution, and a future of gender equality as a higher and more advanced stage of evolution.

The basic assumption at work in all this was that human biology and the social structures that grew up around it were flawed and in need of improvement. This is consistent with the image of the human as God; the world was imperfect and filled with injustice (including gendered hierarchies)

and it was up to humans to improve and perfect it. One aspect of this perfection was pursuing equality between men and women.

The Quest for Equality

One of the most defining features of the Age of Reason was rejection of hierarchy— at least within Christendom. This trend was in large part a backlash from the rigid hierarchy of the feudal hereditary aristocracy. Europeans came to view decentralization of power as a panacea to the problems that arose from centralization of power.

The extreme rejection of the notion of concentrated power was summarized by Denis Diderot:

> The arbitrary rule of a just and enlightened prince is always bad. His virtues are the most dangerous and the surest form of seduction: they lull a people imperceptibly into the habit of loving, respecting, and serving his successor, whoever that successor may be, no matter how wicked or stupid.[68]

If concentration of power in the hands of one individual was absolutely evil, then it followed logically that the total distribution of power was absolutely good. This sentiment drew on a Latin proverb: *Vox populi, vox Dei*— "the voice of the people is the voice of God."

Advocates of democratic reform adopted this slogan, and it became part of the drive for progress and freedom. In this worldview, decentralization or democratization of political power signified freedom and progress. To continue the sacred mission of civilizational progress would require ever more liberty, and liberty meant freeing people from the constraints of hierarchy by means of equality. Affirming innate superiority of one group over another is a basis for hierarchy and carries potential for abuse. This logic had to extend to women and gender sooner or later.

---

[68] Denis Diderot, *Refutation of Helvetius*

Equality also feeds into the logic of economic growth. If productive classes have equal rights, and can be sure that they will receive a fair share of the fruits of their labor, they have a stronger incentive to work. Likewise, giving equal opportunities to individuals of all social classes ensures that exceptional talent does not go to waste. The economic logic of equality could apply to men and women as social classes, so a morality that valued economic growth above all else would eventually have to extend equal rights to men and women.

The ideal of equality demanded that women become more educated to carry responsibilities similar to those carried by men. To fill these roles, they would need to be "liberated" from the domestic sphere, to make them better able to compete in the formal labor market. To realize this vision, like so many aspects of the emerging ideology of liberalism, would be a costly process. Extensive education required paying teacher salaries, funding an academic establishment for training teachers, and removing girls from productive labor for many hours per day. Female participation in the formal labor market would also require replacing their domestic labor.

The key to realizing this vision of equality was, ironically, the construction of a world system based upon intense inequality.

Empire Building

While liberalism brought more equality to Western Europe and the European diaspora, what was actually happening was a shift from a feudal regional hierarchy to a colonial global hierarchy which subordinated markets in Africa, Asia, and the Americas to European interests. In other words, Western civilization resolved some of its internal social tension by replacing the underclass of feudal peasants with a new global underclass of colonized peoples. All of the intellectual movements of the early modern period were exploration of new possibilities opened by an influx of wealth from the colonies into European markets.

Feminism was one such ideology that began to grow in the wake of rising wealth surpluses. Technological development acted as a multiplier, further increasing surplus wealth and free time. These surpluses led to the

development of mechanized production which began to compete with the products of domestic female labor, in particular textiles. This further weakened the position of women and demanded that they seek some other means of power or leverage in society— a demand which feminism would eventually fill.

The beneficial relationship between the new colonial order and feminism was not a one-way street; feminism would also eventually support the colonial world order. Initially, colonialism was justified under the banner of Christianity. Massacres and looting were deemed a necessary part of forcing Christianity on native populations. As more people accepted Christianity, however, this justification was no longer as compelling, but the West had already come to depend on the new order.

The abuses of the colonial era sparked discussion about the idea of universal human rights, which later extended to women's rights.[69] These ideas provided a new moral framework which would eventually justify the economic hierarchy of the new world order.

While at first European dominance was justified by bringing Christianity, once colonized peoples accepted Christianity, the discourse shifted to bringing civilization and development to the colonies. Ethnic Europeans, much like the image of an ethnic European Jesus, were framed as saviors of humanity, but salvation took the form of technology and eventually rights for women. As European belief in the Gospel of the New Testament declined, the gospel of progress (including the struggle for equal rights for women) took its place.

Secular progress theology was a refinement of colonialism. Christian missionary efforts could only continue until people adopt Christianity, but progress could go on indefinitely. Justifying colonialism with progress was a self-perpetuating cycle. Wealth extracted from colonies enabled technological and social development in the West, and the West could then use this "progress" to justify continued dominance over the colonies— the colonized, incapable of such development, should surely not be left alone to rule themselves as they saw fit. Eventually, the liberation of women would become an essential component of progress theology. Some of the most well-known

[69] For example, the Scholastics of colonial Spain, such as Francisco de Vitoria and Bartolomé de las Casas.

examples of colonial women's rights discourse are the British campaign against the Hindu practice of *sati*, or burning widows, in India, and the campaign to eradicate the Islamic veil among Egyptian women on the pretext that it was an impediment to modernization.

A discourse of moral superiority is important both for motivating colonizers and gaining the consent of the colonized. Europeans could not control large tracts of territory by pure violence. In British India, less than 100,000 British ruled over hundreds of millions of Indians. To gain the consent of the colonized, it was necessary to convince them that colonization was in their best interest.

To achieve this, the colonizers had to convince the colonized that adopting European customs and technology would bring an improvement to their condition, and that obtaining this improvement required accepting European dominance. Science and technology, whether in transport, agriculture, manufacturing, or medicine, played a major role in this narrative. Likewise, convincing women that they were oppressed and that this oppression could be removed by adopting innovative new European gender roles was a means of gaining consent of the colonized.

A narrative that appeals mainly to women can have a powerful effect on potential resistance movements. Women's perceptions and feelings may strongly influence their sons, husbands, and brothers. If women believe that colonial influence can truly improve their condition, it will most certainly reduce the overall motivation of a colonized population to fight against colonizers. In this way, feminism eventually became an important part of the ideological bond which holds together the modern world system.

Feminist discourse convinces people that Western dominance is preferable in several ways. Many feminist narratives portray patriarchal family structures as inherently abusive, and media influenced by feminism depicts independent career women in a positive light. Researchers in the Western academic tradition formulate statistics like the gender equality index that portray the condition of women as being better in Western societies. Direct assistance can also promote feminist policy goals; in some cases, financial aid and loans to colonized countries are contingent on more women entering the formal labor force. In such cases, governments are incentivized

to encourage women to pursue modern careers, and add curriculum in public schools to that end.

The modern world order rests on this feedback loop of moral superiority. The idea of women's liberation convinces local populations of the necessity of conforming to European norms and customs, and of the futility of resistance against Western hegemony. A sense of inferiority generates demand for Western products, including technology, lifestyle products, entertainment and education. It also helps to provide human capital to Western economies by convincing subordinated populations to send talented students to work in the power centers of the world system.

Injection of expensive lifestyle products into colonies and extraction of cheap natural resources and labor maintains a perpetual imbalance. Colonized countries do not have the wealth to actually implement feminist reforms on the same scale as the West. However, small groups of wealthy elite and migrants to the West can live Western lifestyles, including gender equality. To do this, however, they must serve Western interests, either by participating in extractive institutions or as labor migrants.

Gender equality depends on wealth to pay for things like extensive education and labor saving home appliances. It also works much better in an industrialized or post-industrial economy, where many forms of employment do not depend on male physical strength and endurance. These wealth surpluses are directly related to countries that don't have them, and therefore have much more difficulty establishing gender equality.

According to the morality of progress theology, this means that wealthier countries with more gender equality are superior to poorer countries with less gender equality. Therefore, poorer countries must strive to imitate wealthier countries by purchasing their products and adopting their models of education, but these purchases maintain the wealth imbalance by transferring wealth from poorer to wealthier countries. Feminist ideology thus forms part of a feedback loop which maintains the hierarchy of the international system.

It took centuries before the moral framework developed during the Age of Reason would be implemented in this manner, but by considering this dynamic it is possible to see that feminism, along with other aspects of "human rights," were filling a political and moral vacuum. Many histories of feminism

portray the movement purely as a struggle for women's rights, but from this broader structural perspective, it is clear there were also material interests. The moral frameworks that emerged from the Age of Reason appeared during the construction of a world system dominated by Western interests, and these moral frameworks eventually became an integral part of the system.

Humans are moral beings, so political and economic hierarchies must be constructed upon a moral foundation. Much of the discourse that emerged from the Age of Reason can be seen as an attempt to develop a morality suitable for the emerging political and economic realities. Western hegemony demanded a narrative of Western superiority, and feminism, along with other aspects of "human rights," and science came to play this role. Today, feminist narratives have become key to upholding the structure of Western global dominance. Western governments invest large sums of money into scholarships for women from former colonies to attend women's studies programs, and NGOs backed by the West promote feminist curricula. NGOs, including the United Nations, also promote contraception and greater female formal labor force participation in almost every country in the world.

On a broad, global scale, this still fits into the pattern of emulating ethnically European men who resemble the image of the ethnically European god of Christian imagery. Just as women adopting masculine qualities was conceived as progress, progress in the colonies meant becoming more like the colonizers. This pattern persists today in the efforts to implement modern, Western gender equality in the rest of the world.

Men's Role in Formulating Feminist Discourse

It is unclear exactly who invented the word "feminism," but Charles Fourier is often credited with originating the term. Fourier was an early 13th/19th century H/CE socialist philosopher known for his utopian visions, many of which have strong feminist themes. His writings were an attempt to convert the idealistic fervor of the French revolution into real social theory. Fourier believed that the structure of family and sexual relations were fundamental to the structure of society, so he advocated for a radical transformation of family and marriage to bring about a radically new and better society.

Fourier rejected all traditional assumptions and tried to construct a completely new social order designed to maximize human pleasure. If the Church had commanded the people to endure suffering for the sake of the afterlife, Fourier's utopianism represented the polar opposite— he believed the all social rules and regulations should be reordered to maximize pleasure in this life.

Fourier saw the repression of desire as a cardinal sin and the root of all evil. As such, he envisioned a future where all relationships would be structured to maximize pleasure and passion. To this end, he developed a heavy critique of women's role in society and the institution of marriage, arguing instead for the total equality of women. In his ideal society, women would be used to motivate male labor. The most beautiful women, aged 16 to 20, would be given prestigious positions at the head of work parties, and the best performing workers would be rewarded by sex with one of the young girls. Fourier also believed that each woman should have multiple sexual partners, and that preventing women from doing so caused illness. In his ideal society, each woman would have four simultaneous husbands or lovers.

Fourier lamented that French society accepted male promiscuity but stigmatized women who had sex with many men. Since he believed sexual repression caused illness, he argued that women should have sex with whoever they are attracted to. In his ideal world, marriage would be abolished, and everyone would be able to have as much sex as they wanted. He argued that monogamy was unnatural, using the high prevalence of infidelity to support his arguments.

Fourier was perhaps the first thinker to link social progress to women's liberation:

> As a general thesis: Social progress... occurs by virtue of the progress of women toward liberty, and social decline by virtue of decreases in the liberty of women.[70]

Fourier tended to view the natural world as highly flexible and changeable, which can be seen as an extreme version of evolutionary theory. For example, he believed that sharks and lions would die out and be replaced with non-

[70] Oeuvres Complettes de Charles Fourier., I, 90, 132-33

violent "anti-lions" and "anti-sharks." He also believed that humans would later develop tails which could manipulate objects, similar to how monkeys use their tails. One of the most famous and outlandish examples of his utopianism was that he believed that salt water in the ocean could eventually be replaced with lemonade.

Despite the eccentric and absurd ideas in some of his work, Fourier was highly influential among European intellectuals. His works influenced a number of prominent thinkers, including Marx and Engels. Marxist discourse eventually became one of the biggest influences on feminist discourse, particularly with the emergence of second wave feminism in the 1380's/1960's H/CE. Fourier's followers established dozens of communes in Europe and the Americas based upon Fourier's principles, composed of tens or hundreds of individuals. His works were also influential among occult and spiritist movements, and many early feminists and suffragettes also either belonged to or were influenced by these movements.

Theologically, Fourier's ideas were based on the idea that human passions were a direct expression of God's will, so the pursuit of desire and passion should shape society and ultimately nature. Fourier was not an atheist, but he rejected any claims of the divine origin of the Bible and believed instead that human passions should replace revelation in shaping the contours of society. In this sense he agreed with other philosophers of the Age of Reason that the internal life of human beings should replace divine revelation as the main source of legislation, but he viewed human passion rather than reason as the most important means of understanding God's will.

There are several important points to note when looking at Fourier's work. It is significant that the origin of the word "feminism" itself is credited to a man. Consistent with Wollstonecraft's belief that women should be trained to be more masculine, Fourier argued that the same standards of sexual conduct should be applied to both men and women. This is consistent with the general theme of defining women becoming more like men as liberation. It makes sense that a man would be the one to develop this concept, since the ultimate result of the concept would be to make women more sexually available to men.

Modern psychological studies have shown that the vast majority of women do not have the same desire for multiple sexual partners as men, and there are biological as well as social reasons for this difference. A man can impregnate multiple women, whereas women are typically more concerned with securing the loyalty and support of a man capable of providing for her and her children. As such, it is relatively rare for women to enthusiastically pursue sexual relationships with multiple men, while this behavior is very common among men.

Fourier was also a major early advocate of developing contraception. Since he envisioned eliminating all unpleasantness from the world, it followed that women must be able to have sexual intercourse without enduring the pain and difficulty of childbirth. Some later feminist discourse built on this thinking and framed pregnancy and childbirth as a form of oppression or slavery. While these ideas became common among later generations of feminists, it is remarkable that tracing them back to their origin reveals they were first developed by a man.

Like Mill, Fourier advocated using women to advance the goals of the theology of progress. Fourier's view, where feminine beauty and sexuality would motivate the labor of men was much more hedonistic and sexualized than Mill's, but the fundamental principle is the same— that general economic benefit can be achieved by removing women from traditional gender roles and pushing them into the public sphere. In modern economics, pleasure is often likened to utility, so both Mill and Fourier were interested in how to extract maximum utility from women.

Considering the economic dimension of these ideas, there are similarities to the logic of colonialism. Women (in their oppressed state) are viewed as the inferior "other" which must be elevated to the level of the male ideal. As with colonialism, this process is framed as helping and uplifting women, but it happens to yield many benefits to the ones doing the "uplifting." In the case of colonies, the process of bringing European civilization to non-Europeans enriches men, and in the case of women's liberation, women become more sexually available to men as they enter the public sphere.

Fourier's feminism is ostensibly about improving the condition of women, but it actually serves male desires while reducing men's responsibility to their sexual partners. Marriage entails a commitment by a man not to abandon a woman during the difficulty of childbearing and childrearing. Many women actually enjoy the process of having children and wish to have children, but prefer to do so in the context of a stable, secure, and loving relationship. For men, commitment means sacrificing sexual enjoyment and the chance to impregnate more women by focusing energy on caring for a woman (or women) and their children.

Bringing women into the formal labor force empowers women in terms of giving them earning power independent of men. On one hand, this is a kind of liberation, because it means that they no longer depend on men. On the other hand, abandoning traditional gender roles and putting all feminine labor in the public sphere means men do not depend on their wives. This means that it is easier for women to leave abusive men, but it also means it is easier for men to abandon a woman to pursue other women. Since most women prefer to have stable relationships with one man, mutual financial independence actually works against their interests by "liberating" men from responsibility.

This situation has some similarities to the problems that Age of Reason thinkers wished to escape. Under feudalism, a corrupt clergy had claimed that they wanted to save the people's souls, but instead exploited them for personal gain. Early male advocates of feminism believed themselves to be "saving" women from their miserable condition, but the reforms they proposed actually enabled new forms of abuse of women. Likewise, colonizers claimed they were bringing salvation and civilization to savages in South America, Africa, and other non-European lands, but in the process of seeking to "improve" these cultures, Europeans enriched themselves.

Continuing the process of dismantling families was key to realizing both the visions of Fourier and Mill. For Fourier, women being in exclusive relationships with men was a major impediment to maximizing pleasure. For Mill, women marrying and having children from an early age would obstruct their ability to use their talents in male dominated professions.

This logic thus built upon and continued the work of the Church in reducing the size of families. Yet, the Age of Reason marginalized the role of the Church, so the Church would no longer be able to profit from increasing individualization of society. So what would take the place of the Church as the main custodian and beneficiary of this process? This brings us to the next chapter of the story; the industrial revolution.

Chapter 6

The Industrial Revolution

If the "Age of Reason" provided the ideological rationale for restructuring gender relations, industrialization provided the physical means to achieve it. With wealth surpluses generated by industrialization, Europeans gradually began dismantling traditional gender roles, which would have a disproportionate effect on women.

The emphasis on reason in the new Western value system shifted society toward a much more materialistic worldview. After all, the spiritual domain is largely beyond the bounds of the rational mind. The shift toward materialism makes sense in the context of disempowering the clergy; merchants and artisans were often looked down upon by the clergy as too "worldly." Developing a more materialistic theology boosted the status of merchants and artisans while undermining the status of the clergy. This shift brought tangible economic gains— as education shifted away from theology and toward more logic and mathematics, people became more adept at business and manufacturing, increasing profits and productivity.

As material production in large factories and workshops increased, women's production in the home lost importance. The new belief system defined economic production as the greatest moral good, meaning women were also viewed as spiritually inferior, since women were producing less material output. Women in traditional gender roles make important contributions for the health, emotional and psychological wellbeing of the family, but a materialistic worldview downplayed these contributions while emphasizing material production.

In viewing the development of feminism during Europe's transition from feudalism to modernity, it would be misleading (and indeed, materialistic) to focus on industrialization alone. Industrialization was only one part of a kind "trinity" of modernity. Government and finance were just as important in breaking down traditional gender roles. Industry, government, and finance all supported and enabled each other's development, and as time went on, feminist ideas became tightly interwoven with all three.

Understanding the development of the modern world system, then, depends on understanding feminism, just as understanding feminism requires understanding the development of the modern world system.

Although industry, government, and finance are so tightly interconnected that they can be seen as a single system, they are each examined separately in the following three chapters for the sake of conceptual clarity. Industrialization is covered first not because it was the first to emerge chronologically, but because industry had the earliest and most profound effects on women.

The Agrarian Revolution

Pre-modern Europe was mostly agrarian with the majority of the population closely connected to the land. Industrialization required concentrating the population in cities, and all these people needed to eat somehow. Therefore, an agricultural revolution had to come before the industrial revolution. When discussing the condition of women, agricultural labor is especially important, since the vast majority of women lived in the countryside and worked in agriculture.

Before the modern era, agriculture in Europe was mostly organized under the open-field system. There was no real concept of individual ownership of land; instead, land was granted to a lord and tenant farmers paid rent to the lord. Tenants could not be evicted from the land without just cause, and families had hereditary rights to work plots of land in shared open fields.

Overall agricultural output increased greatly with the decline of communal land management, but much of this productivity came from pushing small farmers off of the land. Some of these farmers worked for wages but still produced most of their own food, and sometimes their own clothing and textiles as well. Rural poor, beyond providing for their own needs, could generate some income by raising animals on communal grazing land and selling products like eggs and butter.

The process of converting these lands to private ownership is often called "enclosure." This process began as early as the 6th/13th century H/CE with some common use land being converted to private estates, but it greatly

intensified in the 12th/18th century H/CE, around the same time the industrial revolution was starting to gain momentum. Enclosure was most intense in Britain (which also led the Industrial Revolution), but also affected other Western European countries such as France, Holland, and Germany.

This process was driven partly by wealth that began to flow into Europe from the colonies. New wealth surpluses generated more demand for luxury products, including foods. This made agriculture more profitable, generating an incentive for the rich to evict subsistence farmers and use their land for producing cash crops. Surplus wealth also meant there was more capital for developing new agricultural techniques and tools. Through a combination of political influence, legal reforms, and the competitive advantages of new techniques, wealthy landholders gradually amassed more and more control over land.

Before enclosure, women's work was indispensable for agricultural labor, and wives often played important roles in management of both homes and farms. Women in rural areas typically produced economic value well in excess of their personal needs. A large number of peasant women were in direct control of production by raising poultry and animals and producing textiles or clothing from their own flax or wool. This gave women a considerable amount of influence and economic power. Ill treatment of wives could negatively affect labor vital to the well-being of a husband and his children.

Having a happy wife was thus not only pleasant, but profitable, giving men a real incentive to keep their wives happy. Critically, work in the home was also compatible with the duties of child rearing, which meant women could care for children without major losses in other economic activities.

Evicting smallholder farmers from their land meant that a growing mass of people were no longer in direct control over their livelihood, but instead relied completely on wage labor. At first, waged laborers worked mainly on large farms built on recently enclosed land. On these farms, wages for men were usually at least double the wages of women, and often three

times higher. The new agricultural methods generally involved heavier work by fewer workers, which meant men were more sought after than women.[71]

With wage labor as their only means of earning, women's economic power declined due to child rearing responsibilities and having less physical strength and endurance than men. In some cases, women became an economic burden on their husbands. It's not hard to imagine how this could lead to more abuse and resentment of women, as they would be less appreciated and would have less economic leverage in marriage.

Enclosure also had negative effects on wealthy women. Prior to enclosure, women from wealthy rural families were often involved in management of laborers and finances on farms. As these families became more wealthy, it became more common for wealthy women to stop productive work entirely and focus on high society leisure pursuits such as music, fashion, literature, and social events. While these activities were important for social status, they still deprived women from direct participation in and control over production.

Centralization of agricultural production thus rendered women in both lower and upper classes less economically productive, and thus less valued and appreciated from the materialistic perspective of the theology of progress and economic growth.

Competition and Consumption

Although centralizing agriculture further increased wealth surpluses originally derived from colonialism, it greatly worsened conditions for the lower classes. It is unclear to what extent new agricultural practices were more productive, and to what extent they diverted production away from foraging and subsistence agriculture and toward large scale commercial farms. Conventional histories view the new agricultural practices as much more efficient, but a number of historians challenge this view.

---

[71] These techniques included the four course crop rotation system, which relied on heavy plowing, and the seed drill, which involved a heavy apparatus that was usually operated by men.

The transition to new modes of agriculture engendered dependence on a new, emerging world order, because new agricultural methods caused erosion and degraded soil fertility. So while production increased, farming became less sustainable, increasing the importance of obtaining imported fertilizers and other products from colonies.[72]

The concentrations of excess wealth from both colonialism and intensified agricultural production contributed to the development of new technologies. This was a self-reinforcing cycle— as lower classes lost their ability to produce directly from the land, they were forced to buy goods that they had previously produced themselves. More consumers meant more demand for mass-produced goods, making large-scale, centralized production more profitable. More consumption of industrially-produced goods accelerated concentration of wealth and made more money available for developing new technologies.

The first industry to be mechanized was also the most important industry controlled by women prior to the industrial revolution— spinning and weaving. Before industrialization, women produced much of the cloth and clothing their families needed, and often generated additional income by selling homemade clothing articles. After eviction from communal lands, lower class women no longer had sheep or flax fields from which they could source raw materials for their work. Even those who did struggled to compete as new automated spinning and weaving mills flooded the market with cheap goods.

As a result of the decline of home industries, women became increasingly economically dependent on men. At the same time, with waged labor taking the place of traditional home production, men became less dependent on women. Accounts from the industrial revolution describe a

---

[72] Although the question of how much the agrarian revolution actually increased agricultural output is secondary to the history of feminism, it is important to note, since the massive damage done to traditional social structures, including families and women, was justified in part by the supposed superiority of this mode of production. The fact that the agrarian revolution may not have increased production so much as redistributed wealth from the poor to the rich indicates that there are clear incentives to promote historical narratives about the superior productivity of modern technologies, and feminism eventually became a necessary part of stabilizing wealth inequality generated by means of harming women and families.

surge in the number of unemployed and destitute women, as well as as rises in prostitution and female suicide as women struggled to survive. In 1184 H/1771 CE, British agriculturalist Arthur Young commented on women's migration to the cities, observing that "The number of young women that fly thither is almost incredible..."[73] A London magistrate early in the industrial revolution commented on a woman who had killed herself by drowning:

> ...hardly a week passes without one or more instances of that kind, and few or no men have been for some time known to have committed the crime. Perhaps the distress to which some females have been lately reduced may in some measure account for it.

Suicide was far more common among women during the Industrial Revolution, and a large proportion of suicides were by women who had sexual relations outside of marriage and were subsequently abandoned by their lovers, commonly known as "fallen women."

To say that worsening conditions for women were solely due to their economic power declining would be an oversimplification. Production of cloth and clothing articles inside the home also increases the bond of love within a family, so there was an emotional element to shifting from home production to factories. As individuals relied less on family members and more on government institutions and industrial production, their bond with family grew weaker and their bond with the government and industry grew stronger.

The more women who were unable to compete with heavy industry, the stronger industry became. With more consumers, factories produced higher volume, and cost of production further decreased, further intensifying competition for the remaining female home producers. As more wealth concentrated in the hands of industrialists, they were able to influence politicians to pass laws that further disadvantaged home production and forced more reliance on heavy industry.

---

[73] *Farmer's Letters to the People of England, 1771*

The Decline of the Family

For the first time in history, women, both in the lower classes and the upper classes, had been almost completely economically marginalized. With machines taking over more and more traditional domains of female labor, childbirth and childrearing was one of the last bastions of female power, but mechanization started to make children less economically important, and birth rates declined.

The situation for women in the new class of urban poor was desperate, and many displaced women were ready to provide any domestic services that a wife could provide, including sex, for low prices. Why should a man marry and carry the legal burden of providing for a wife when he can get everything that the wife offers outside the family with less responsibility and more personal freedom? This idea was especially compelling to men since women could easily become an economic burden on men since their wages were so much lower.

Since the family was no longer central to production, high earning men began to prefer female laborers, in many cases prostitutes, over wives. In an age dominated by the logic of economic efficiency, this was clearly advantageous; if a maid became pregnant, she could simply be dismissed and replaced with another one who was more fit to work. By contrast, a wife could lose wage-earning potential if she became pregnant.

Upper class women could no longer depend on their utility to the household to earn respect and appreciation from their husbands, and instead began to focus increasingly on fashion and frivolities to attract affection. Lower class women became extremely vulnerable to abuse— the spectacular, grotesque, and unprecedented murders of Jack the Ripper is a famous example that illustrates the dangers the masses of impoverished urban women faced.[74]

---

[74] Jack the Ripper was one of the first documented serial killers in the West. He murdered and dismembered a number of prostitutes, shocking early industrial English society. Serial murder of women, especially prostitutes later became increasingly common, particularly in America, and Jack the Ripper is sometimes credited with starting this trend. A number of similar serial murderers of prostitutes and lower class urban women existed in France and the United States as well, but Jack the Ripper was the first to bring the phenomena to wide popular consciousness.

It is difficult to assess the condition of women in all places in the world throughout history, but the phenomenon of men repeatedly murdering women for personal pleasure appears to be something that first appeared in the Western world during the Industrial Revolution. Although rejected by mainstream society, these actions were actually in harmony with the logic of the society; machines had replaced women in many ways, and the masses of impoverished women represented a surplus. Both female suicide and murder by serial killers reduced the surplus.

This situation was aggravated by earlier Christian legal reforms inspired by doctrines like Original Sin, which had severely disadvantaged women, but other Christian customs like the prohibition on adultery and divorce had secured the integrity of the family as a protective force for women. With the decline of Christianity, extramarital sex became more common, further decreasing the leverage women had to secure the support and loyalty of their husbands. Marriage thus ceased to be a protective haven for women, and some other kind of protection became a matter of dire necessity.

What other options were available? Obviously women were in no position to challenge prevailing institutions by military force. The only option available to women was to try to reclaim the power they had lost from the same industries that had taken it from them. This eventually became one of the most important expressions of feminism; the struggle for better wages and working conditions in the formal labor market.

The Cost of Economic Thought

The theology of progress demanded constant improvement in productive processes. Improvement could only be defined by quantification. To measure and optimize productive processes required quantifying them and collecting data. This led to a preference for things that could be quantified, since they could be subjected to the logic of economic thought.

The contribution of men to a household could be easily measured in their wages, but since so much of women's labor was unpaid, the new paradigm tended to devalue women and their contributions. John Stuart Mill's

utilitarianism held that women *competing* with men was key to the improvement of society. The new economic thought emerging in Europe viewed competition as a powerful force for improving and developing the human race.

Increasing competition in the market (including competition between men and women) increased economic output, but it came with a number of side effects. Among them was an increase in the number of illegitimate births. Studies of birth records in England show that the rate of births out of wedlock more than tripled from less than 2% in 1100 H/1700 CE to over 6% by 1214 H/1800 CE, an intense period of industrialization. Rates of illegitimacy were especially high in regions with lots of heavy industry or mining.[75] The main difference between these areas and other areas is that there were more women in workplaces with large numbers of men. Where women remained in traditional family contexts, affairs outside of marriage were far less likely to occur.

Women experienced disproportionately negative effects from the birth of illegitimate children. In most cases, mothers of illegitimate children were abandoned because the fathers had no legal obligations to them. The prevalence of extramarital relationships in industrial economies waxed and waned, but overall it increased steadily into the industrial era, becoming nearly universal in modern times.

The issue of illegitimate births is illustrative of the problem of excessive focus on quantitative measures of progress. Illegitimacy brought many economic costs, but they were far more difficult to quantify than the increase in economic output that came from large scale entry of women into the formal labor market. Industrial output is easy to measure, but the psychological effect of thousands of children growing up without fathers, the misery their mothers undergo while trying to raise them alone, and increased crime rates (common among fatherless children) are much more difficult to quantify. Rising crime rates were indeed a defining feature of the Industrial Revolution.

---

[75] Laslett, P., & Oosterveen, K. *Long-Term Trends in Bastardy in England: A Study of the Illegitimacy Figures in the Parish Registers and in the Reports of the Registrar General, 1561-1960.*

Feminist historians acknowledge the negative effects of industrialization on women, but the vast majority still believe that it was beneficial overall since it gave women more independence from men. This makes sense considering how bad the situation for women had become over the preceding centuries. However, individualization also serves the logic of quantification. Larger, more centralized organizations like corporations and governments are better able to collect and analyze data than smaller, decentralized organizations like families. It is thus easier to optimize production from individuals than families. This type of feminist thought thus has common interests with the process of industrialization.

In some ways, the new economic paradigm was yet another expression of Christian theology's animosity toward women. In Adam Smith's view, the invisible hand that moved the market was the will of God. In other words, God wanted to maximize economic output. Since women's contribution to society more often took the form of emotional support, love, and long-term investments like child bearing and rearing, this economic logic maintained the disdain toward women even as explicit religious sentiment declined.

In other words, Smith's economic thought, although appearing to be a radical departure from the past, continued to have the same impact on women that Christian theology had for centuries–a systematic degradation and devaluation of women. Casting economic growth as an expression of divine will is still consistent with the idea of God as man, since quantified economic production was traditionally a domain where men were stronger. In terms of elevating the male principle and degrading the female principle, economic thought picked up where Christian theology had left off.

Replacing the Human

There were two main responses to the suffering of women during the Industrial Revolution. One was to campaign for greater valuation of domestic work such as childbearing and childrearing. The other was to seek out greater earning opportunities for women and more legal protections for female

workers. The second approach ultimately prevailed, probably due to economic interests.

Seeking greater appreciation for the work of mothers was a doomed task in a society ruled by economic logic. Industrialization was a continuous process of replacing human beings with machines, so while humans remained necessary, they were much less necessary than they had been in the past. Mass unemployment first appeared around the same time as industrialization, and it was around this time that ideas of overpopulation and eugenics first appeared.

A decline in the value of humans would lead to a corresponding decline in the value of mothers and wives. The period of industrialization in Europe saw steadily declining fertility as more and more families practiced contraception, most often *coitus interruptus*.[76] It also saw intensifying class disparities, and the growth of education as a status symbol. This meant that higher fertility became a liability, because fewer children meant more resources could be invested in each child, resulting in higher levels of education.

Decreasing fertility rates are an inevitable consequence of widespread adoption of the theology of progress. There is a strong correlation between capital accumulation and technological innovation. As wealth becomes more concentrated, the wealthy have more surplus income to invest in developing new technologies.[77] As new technologies increase productivity, they concentrate wealth in the hands of those who control the technology. Low fertility maintains capital concentration, since there are fewer children to inherit wealth.

High fertility is thus anathema to the theology of progress, since wealth becomes more distributed, reducing innovation and growth. Reducing fertility rates was an effective way to concentrate both financial and intellectual capital, both of which were necessary for developing more complex technology. This meant that what for centuries had been a woman's

---

[76] Caselli, G., Vallin, J. and Wunsch, G. *Changes in total fertility rates in England-Wales, France, and Sweden, 1740-1940.*

[77] For example, see *Capital Accumulation and Innovation as Complementary Factors in Long-Run Growth* by Howett and Aghion.

greatest asset (her fertility) became a liability as technological innovation continued.

Although the economic value of fertility declined, human desire for sex did not. Male perception of sex appeal revolves mostly around signs of fertility and health. Early feminist writers like Wollstonecraft and Mill lamented the superficiality of women in this era for their excessive focus on their appearance, but what other choice did they have? It became much more difficult to earn their husband's loyalty through sensible management of the household and responsible mothering, so more reliance on feminine charm and attraction was a ready substitute.

Rather than feminine beauty serving a functional purpose of indicating fertility and motivating the formation of families, beauty became an aesthetic good or a form of entertainment. In other words, feminine beauty went from being an essential functional force to a means of male entertainment and enjoyment.

It is a fundamental economic principle that overabundance of anything causes its value to decline, and feminine beauty is no exception to this rule. In modern societies with mass food production, people are less grateful for food, and throwing food away becomes routine. Just as industrial agriculture flooded the market with food, mass female participation in the labor market flooded men's lives with women. With surpluses of food and women, eating and sex eventually became matters of enjoyment rather than survival. Just as people lost appreciation for food and began to throw it away, men began to lose appreciation for women and treat them as disposable vehicles for male pleasure.

In modern economies, it has become normal for men to have numerous female sexual partners, while women struggle to find a man who will commit to a relationship. Highly appealing men drift from woman to woman while women despair after being repeatedly abandoned. One of the major goals of feminism has been to develop institutional support structures that can help women get by without the support of men. This is inspired partly by the trauma of industrialization, where women being abandoned by men became more common, and caused not only emotional stress but brought real threats to survival such as malnutrition and dangerous working conditions.

Mass unemployment, or large numbers of unwanted humans, was a natural consequence of the higher efficiency of industrial production. Pre-industrial producers generally lived very near the site of production and consumption and had tight relationships with consumers, so production was highly responsive to demand. With the rise of large, centralized enterprises, the overall amount of production greatly increased, but it also became much more difficult to calibrate the rate of production to the rate of consumption. This generated surplus production which caused prices to crash, lowering profitability and leading to widespread layoffs. These large masses of unemployed became a serious liability for society.

Starting with Thomas Malthus, a number of thinkers began to fear the effects of overpopulation, raising interest in contraception. This sentiment viewed female fertility as a kind of curse that threatened to destroy humanity. More than just giving marriage and family a low value, this actually portrayed women as an existential threat.

Although mechanization devalued both women and childrearing, the difficult condition of women also drove mechanization. Machinery opened more opportunities for women to work, first by making male physical strength less important on the labor market and eventually by reducing the workload of domestic labor by means of appliances like the washing machine.

This also devalued men in the eyes of women, since a man's strength became less important for the survival of a family. A woman who is dependent on her husband is more vulnerable to abuse, but she also is much more likely to appreciate and respect him. There are certainly some cases where men abuse their wives without any cause, but many men are more likely to become violent with their wives when treated disrespectfully— especially when divorce is not an option. A dependent woman might tolerate marital difficulties with greater patience and avoid conflict with her husband rather than bickering and arguing with him. Likewise, a husband who is dependent on his wife will usually make more effort to avoid hurting her.

So although mechanization "liberated" men and women from each other, it also increased the likelihood of abuse by decreasing respect and appreciation of men and women for each other. This establishes a self-perpetuating cycle; women seek independence from men to protect

themselves from abuse, but this independence makes abuse more likely to occur.

Just as the Church had previously profited from degradation of the family, industry now perpetuated this degradation and profited from it. The Church had profited from declining family size in the form of bequests, and industry profited from mass evictions and pushing women into the formal labor market in the form of low wages and high demand for mass produced products.

Although the logic of economic efficiency was originally intended to make human life better, what emerged from the Industrial Revolution was actually a profoundly anti-human system which privileged the profits of mechanized industry above human wellbeing. The miserable conditions of laborers in the Industrial Revolution eventually inspired the labor movement, which became tightly connected to the feminist movement.

While these movements eventually succeeded in winning some protections for women in industrialized societies, they did not stop the trend of replacing humans with machines. Mothers and wives remained economically marginalized even after adoption of feminist reforms. Although the new Western theology exalted the status of human beings in theory, in reality the hierarchy that accompanied this theology assigned status according to a person's usefulness to the process of mechanization and technological development.

Female Formal Labor Force Participation from the Perspective of Men

Although most feminists view women leaving the home and entering wage labor as an improvement in the condition of women, this shift actually benefited men in a number of ways. Women were not initially especially interested in working outside the home, but rather were actively encouraged to do so by male-dominated governments and corporations.

The state preferred women working outside the home because wage labor was much easier to tax than domestic labor. For wealthy industrialists, more female workers in the market meant more abundant and cheaper labor.

Furthermore, since women working in factories no longer produced goods at home, it meant more consumers would buy goods produced in factories.

Many feminist historians portray women entering waged labor as a form of empowerment, but the real effect of this process was to transfer productive power from the hands of women into the hands of male industrialists. Even after decades of feminist reforms in industrial economies, most large corporations are still owned and operated by men. In this sense, women working outside the home actually represented a disempowerment of women that primarily benefited men.

More women in wage labor also served male sexual desires. As women left domestic labor in favor of wage labor, libertine bachelors and womanizers became more common. As enclosure and industrialization drove home producers out of business, more women were forced into prostitution, domestic service in the homes of wealthy families, or workplaces with male colleagues and supervisors. Thus, a greater variety of women became available for men's enjoyment and sexual pleasure. An increase in the supply of prostitutes would have likely have led to a decrease in prices. Affairs of wealthy men with maids and domestic servants also became increasingly common during industrialization.

A woman in the home of her father or husband is not as accessible for romantic or sexual contact as a domestic servant working in the house of someone else's family, or a woman working in a large factory. Some women might enjoy the additional attention that comes with more exposure to men, but it's difficult to say that this is an improvement in their condition. Generally, men are interested in pursuing relationships with multiple women. When women become romantically attached to a man, they usually dislike him looking at other women, which is exactly what industrial working conditions helped men to do.

The rise in sexual relationships outside of marriage also harmed women more than men. In the event of pregnancy, it was relatively easy for men to run away and escape the consequences of pregnancy. Women had much more difficulty doing so; they either had to bear pregnancy and childbirth and its economic consequences alone, or resort to risky abortion procedures. Many unmarried women died during botched abortions.

Married women also suffered from the consequences of these social transformations. One dramatic early example of this is documented in a court case in early modern England in 1086 H/1676 CE, after urban migration had started to accelerate. A pregnant woman by the name of Margaret Kindsley fled from her home with a small child after being severelty beaten by her husband. Friends and relatives attempted to arrange a reconciliation, and her husband agreed to take her back to the family home. After arriving on horseback to take back his wife and child, he had a change of heart at the last moment, and rode off on his horse laughing, saying:

> He doe not matter for a wife, for hee can haue the use of a woman when hee pleseth as soone as any man that haith a wife.[78]

Stories like this illustrate that rising sexual availability of women undermined the security of married women and the institution of marriage itself from very early on in England's industrial transformation.

Most feminists decry restrictions on female sexuality as attempts by men to control women, but prohibition of extramarital sex is actually a powerful protective factor for married women. If a man is denied all sexual outlets other than his wife, this also increases her influence and status with him. Many feminists argue that women having the right to love and have sex with whoever they want is a form of liberation and empowerment, but this actually undermines a key traditional avenue of feminine power.

With increasing availability of sex outside of marriage, the value of sex inside marriage declined. This actually represents economic logic expanding to encompass sexuality. The principle that competition increases efficiency eventually extended to a "market" for female beauty. While very enjoyable for men, this actually makes conditions worse for women. Perception of beauty is relative, so a man may find a woman to be quite beautiful until he sees another more attractive woman. To take an analogy, an orange may taste quite sweet, but when eating it after tasting grapes, it seems sour. The more exposed men became to feminine beauty, the more difficult it became for women to hold their attention. Likewise, as women were exposed

---

[78] E. Rhodes *"As Man and Wyfe Ought to Doe": Reconsidering Marital Separation in Early Modern England.*

to more successful and high status men, they were also more likely to become dissatisfied with their husbands.

An individualist perspective mainly considers the freedom of individual women, without considering the effect that these sexually liberated women have on *other* women and society at large. This kind of lifestyle, in which a woman is exposed to many men and has multiple extramarital relationships in the course of her life, is not necessarily more gratifying or satisfying for women— unless women learn to take a more masculine approach to sexuality. In this regard, women becoming more like men is key to economic growth and the theology of progress.

It's not surprising that the reforms of the Industrial Revolution disproportionately benefited men, because most of the first industrialized countries adopted democratic principles. As such, men, being the only ones with the right to vote, became the supreme legislative authority. Laws were no longer derived from scripture or revelation, but from reason and logic, and those doing the reasoning were all men. It was in the drive to give women political representation that feminism first emerged as a popular movement.

This puts into perspective Mary Wollstonecraft's call for the cultivation of reason in girls— in a society governed by reason, women had to be rational in order to participate in politics. This also helps to explain feminism's heavy emphasis on giving identical education to both boys and girls. In a society governed by reason, it was only through reason that women could defend and pursue their interests.

Every other source of female power had been marginalized. The Church had first broken down the political power of the family, and then through legislation such as the prohibition on divorce, denying women inheritance, and giving their husbands control over their property, weakened the position of women within families. Industrialization then weakened domestic labor, childbearing, and sex as sources of female power. Men no longer even needed to rely on wives for emotional and psychological support, as they had access to a wide range of women either in the form of domestic servants, work colleagues, or prostitutes.

To reclaim some power, women were left with no option except to go deeper into the emerging system; to seek more education, higher wages, and more political representation. It was not, as some feminists argue, that women

were oppressed throughout all of history. Rather, theological misogyny which eventually manifested as a rationalistic obsession with economic growth stripped power from women over a period of centuries and transferred it to men.

This resulted in a vicious cycle. To reclaim some of their power, women had to enter a world of politics and business filled with predatory and abusive men. As women entered the sphere of business and politics, the value of women who stayed in traditional marriages declined, since men were exposed to more women. With the worsening conditions for women who stayed at home, pressure increased on them to go out and seek power in business and politics.

Men gained power, and the only way for women to regain their power was to become, as Wollstonecraft put it, more masculine. This was thus a general masculinization of society, consistent with the concept of striving to become more like a male God.

Class Consciousness and Feminism's Symbiotic Relationship with Industry

In many ways, women were more exposed to abuse in the formal labor market than they were in the family, but factories could also act as a protective force for women. Sarah Bagley, an early American campaigner for women's and labor rights, described this situation in 1255 H/1840 CE:

> Let no (one) suppose that the factory girls are without guardian. We are placed in the care of overseers who feel under moral obligations to look after our interests; and, if we are sick, to acquaint themselves with our situation and wants; and, if need be, to remove us to the Hospital, where we are sure to have the best attendance.[79]

This system, called paternalism, played a prominent role in women's labor in the early industrial era. The role of a factory management closely

[79] Sarah Bagley, *The Pleasures of Factory Life*

resembled the role of the traditional male guardian in the family. The name: "paternalism" itself indicates a shift from the *pater familias* as the focal point of social organization to the factory owner or employer. This new social dynamic would have a radical effect on women's consciousness.

Most obviously, it facilitated an existence for women completely independent of the family. Many factories included boarding houses for female workers complete with a common kitchen. Such accommodation provided a ready alternative to women who might prefer to flee marital difficulties. Factory owners had a clear financial interest in encouraging women to leave their husbands and pursue wage labor instead, since wages for women were much lower. The larger the supply of single women on the market, the cheaper labor prices would become.

Prohibitions on divorce persisted well into industrialization in most Christian countries, and it was much easier for a woman to change employers than to change husbands. Portraying marriage and family as a prison and drudgery, and wage labor as liberation and independence would help to convince women to choose the labor market over marriage, increasing profits for factory owners and advancing the goals of the theology of progress.

Women shifting from dependence on families to dependence on employers brought major changes in women's ideas of identity. When individuals spend most of their time embedded in a family, they come to identify with the family. When someone identifies strongly with a family, they view whatever benefits the family as benefiting themselves. With this understanding, individuals are more willing to make sacrifices for the sake of their family.

In the paternalistic model of production, women lived communally with dozens or hundreds of other women. These women worked together, ate together, washed and bathed together, and slept together. This led to a growing idea of women as a class, or "womankind." This awareness would be vital for shaping narratives of historic oppression of women by men. The fact that many factories had mostly female work forces with all male overseers amplified this idea of class consciousness, as well as the idea of men as historic oppressors of women.

Class consciousness was effective in providing some protections to both workers and women. The idea of belonging to a large group, such as

"womankind" or "workers of the world," helped women and workers to organize and cooperate in seeking social reform. Many communists eventually came to view women's liberation as an essential part of Marxism and communism. While class consciousness provided a collective support mechanism to replace the family, it also increased animosity between classes, leading not only to animosity between the poor and rich, but also tension between men and women.

The worldview of Marxist class consciousness does not allow for the possibility of a benevolent hierarchy. Instead, it views the world as divided into oppressed and oppressors. In family hierarchies, the father and the mother both had different types of authority over male and female children. In the paternalist hierarchy, an all-male class of factory bosses profited disproportionately from the labor of an often completely female workforce. For Marxists, the ruling classes (whether capitalists or men) were the oppressors, and workers and women were the oppressed. The only way for the oppressed to claim their rights from the oppressors was through rebellion and struggle.

When this consciousness became widespread among women, it caused them to view their husbands as oppressors, and revolution as the means to achieve justice. This conflict further eroded the family, intensifying individualism and making people even more dependent on large structures like corporations, governments, and labor unions.

Although the women's rights movement initially sought to protect women against exploitative employers, wealthy factory owners also had an interest in promoting feminist narratives about historical oppression of women by men. If women viewed marriage as oppressive, they would be more eager to have an independent income, swelling the size of the labor market, driving down the cost of labor, and boosting profits for factory owners. Although Marxism was intended as a means of fighting against capitalist oppression, some of the narratives of Marxist class consciousness ultimately benefited capitalist classes.[80]

Disempowering women by undermining home production initially boosted consumption by forcing people to buy products that were previously

[80] Some later Marxist feminist authors like Nancy Fraser and Silvia Fedirici acknowledge how liberal feminism serves the logic of capital.

produced in the home, and breaking down families increased consumer demand even more. Independent women are more likely to live alone, and a more individualistic society means less sharing and more demand for consumer goods and services. High rates of consumption further increase productivity and lower costs, since larger scale production is more efficient and cost-effective than smaller-scale production.

Industry, in turn, is essential to pursuing the central goals of feminism. Economic independence for women by means of education, freedom from domestic labor by means of home appliances, and freedom from childrearing by means of contraception, all require wealth and technology. The development of the pharmaceutical industry yielded contraceptives, the development of the electronics industry produced home appliances, and the development of work opportunities (many of which depended on machinery) freed women from depending on husbands.

In this way, beyond supporting industry materially by lowering the cost of labor and increasing consumption, feminism also provided a moral justification for industrial and technological development. This was vital to the success of industrialization, because there were many strong opponents to the social and environmental damage caused by heavy industry. Whatever harmful side effects industry might have, with a narrative of historic oppression of women by men, the beneficiaries of industrialization could argue that the benefit of rescuing women from historical oppression outweighed any harm. The goals of feminism, economic development, and technological innovation were all fused together under the umbrella of "progress."

A number of members of the British parliament who supported the women's movement were also wealthy industrialists. Jacob Bright, for example, was a major supporter of the women's movement who came from a family that owned cotton spinning mills, and also introduced the linotype machine to England. Peter McLagan was an investor in shale oil mining who also supported the women's movement. Duncan McClaren was another supporter and the founder of Britain's first department store chain. In the US, banking magnate David Rockefeller was a prominent supporter of the women's movement, as was Henry Harber, the owner of a large insurance company. George Francis Train was a railroad and shipping tycoon who also

made large financial contributions to the women's movement. All of these figures actively supported women's suffrage, and the eventual impact of these reforms ultimately benefited their business interests.

Many female supporters of the women's movement were daughters or wives of industrialists or bankers, and provided key financing for the movement. Many of them retained significant interests in the companies run by their male relatives, positioning them as clear beneficiaries to the economic repercussions of the women's rights movement. This is not to say that their support was purely financially motivated; many undoubtedly believed in the moral arguments of feminism. The purpose of mentioning this is only to point out that the material interests of feminism and industrial development overlapped to a large degree.

This mutually beneficial cycle between feminism and industry carried on until the present day. The disintegration of the family unit strengthened industrial production and technological development, and industrial production and technological development enabled ever higher levels of individualism, including women's independence from men and vice versa. Today, feminist rhetoric is an essential element of the policies of most Western corporations. The same corporations also donate to feminist organizations, sponsor scholarships for women, and often include narratives about women's empowerment in their marketing materials.

Industry and feminism ultimately worked together to destroy every factor that had provided security and empowerment to women in traditional economies, including the economic utility of children, home industry, small-scale communal agricultural production, and the prohibition on extramarital sex. All of the power that had once been embedded within the family was thus transferred from women and families to large scale corporate and industrial ventures controlled by men. After all this disempowerment of women, the only path to re-empowerment was for women to enter into and serve the same institutions that had robbed them of their power within the family.

Chapter 7

The Nation-State

Bureaucratic and legal institutions capable of enforcing industrial transformation were not cheap. In England, the process of evicting small scale farmers from their land involved over 5,000 acts of parliament and was met with intense opposition. This economic transformation came along with a massive expansion of state power. Industry needed increased state power to crush opposition to economic reforms, and the state needed increased tax revenue to increase its power. Industry profited directly from women's entry into the formal workforce, and the state profited indirectly through taxation.

Like industrialization, the expansion of state power was initially highly dependent on wealth surpluses derived from colonialism. And like industrialization, state power benefited from the erosion of the family. And like industry, the modern state eventually developed a symbiotic relationship with feminism.

Industrialization brought an explosion of wealth, but this was not necessarily so much an increase in wealth as a transfer of wealth and power from families to the nation-state. Traditional family-based communal agriculture and production is quite sustainable, while industrialization and the modern state are not. To take a metaphor, it is possible to earn a living from harvesting fruit from an orchard, or to cut down the orchard and sell the wood.

Families (especially from the perspective of the state) can be a productive resource just like forests, fisheries, or topsoil. The modern state and industry both thrived on breaking down families as productive units, and harnessing the power of individuals. The more enmeshed individuals are in families, the less those individuals will engage with corporate or state institutions. This applied with the development of Church institutions, and with the secularization of the European economy, came to apply to industrial ventures and the state as well.

Feminism encourages women to be independent of men, which requires pursuing education, careers, and delaying marriage, which naturally leads to smaller families. Having multiple sexual relationships prior to marriage also decreases the strength of marriages. Feminism thus reduces the size and strength of families, making it difficult or impossible for families to challenge state power.

Institutions are composed of people, so building institutions requires sourcing people from somewhere. Modern institutions were constructed by harvesting individuals from families, and feminism eventually became an important tool in this process. Eventually, fertility declined to the point that Western populations could no longer provide for the needs of state and industry, so human resources had to be harvested from the colonies. As immigrants flow in, they are socialized to become more individualistic, and feminist indoctrination plays a vital role in this process.

Effective modern governance, feminism, and individualism are all mutually supportive. It is not an accident that the most individualistic countries rank highest in terms of both gender equality and governance. Finland, Norway, Denmark and Sweden, for example, rank consistently in the top five countries in the World Economic Forum's index of women's rights, are among the top five countries with the highest proportion of single person households, and also rank in the top five on the Global Governance Index.

State support eventually became a vital factor in the spread of feminism, both within Western societies and worldwide, and feminist principles were actually an important part of constructing the modern state. This chapter explores this interdependence, and considers motives that extend well beyond seeking equality and rights for women. Beneath the surface, the birth of the modern state and its relentless centralization of power represented a new institutional configuration shaped by the will to attain divine power.

Materialism, Violence, and the Political Value of Men

Marriage is a contract, and as with most contracts, its success depends on both parties viewing it as beneficial for them. The worldview emerging out of the Age of Reason and Industrial Revolution was highly materialistic; the scientific approach to production was to measure outputs, and then optimize in order to increase output. The goal was to improve humanity (and thus strive toward godliness) by means of rational observation of empirical data and analysis.

The rise of materialism had a number of effects on the perception of marriage. Men's contribution to a marriage was traditionally more physical—bringing in food or money, building and repairing houses, and so forth. While women traditionally made important physical contributions to marriage, their overall contribution tends more toward emotional and psychological support. Negative aspects of the spousal relationship also follow this pattern; if a man becomes abusive, his abuse is more likely to manifest in physical, material ways, while a woman's abuse is more likely to be emotional or psychological.

A materialistic worldview thus has two effects on perception of marriage, both of which are prominent in most feminist thought. Firstly, it emphasizes the importance of traditionally male material contributions over traditionally female emotional and psychological contributions. This contributes to the idea that women need to have earning power comparable to men in order to achieve equality. Secondly, it intensifies the perception of male abuse while downplaying female abuse. This feeds perceptions that men are abusive monsters, and that women must always be financially independent to protect themselves.

This thinking becomes a self-fulfilling cycle; when men perceive women's contribution as being insignificant or unimportant, they are more likely to feel like they are getting less out of the marriage than they are giving. In such situations, they are more likely to abuse or neglect their wives, further intensifying the negative view of men in general and the need for female independence. Materialism was not the only factor driving this cycle; the very real legal and economic marginalization of women also made matters worse.

Societies heavily affected by feminism thus encourage women not only to seek earning power equal to that of men, but also to play sports and engage in self-defense and martial arts training. Both of these are part of making women independent from men. While it's common to see women doing such training in feminist societies, it is relatively rare to see men trying to learn feminine skills of emotional and social intelligence. This reflects a basic attitude of viewing masculine attributes as superior, consistent with reshaping humanity in the image of a male god.

Oddly enough, societies affected by feminism celebrate physically strong women, and even produce many films portraying women as strong fighters who defeat men in hand to hand combat. The combat skill of these women is cast as women's empowerment, but never a necessary result of men neglecting their obligation to protect women.

Prior to the rise of the modern state, male anger and violence served an important function. Warfare and community security were the general responsibility of all men. In emergencies, violence can be a desirable quality which keeps the community safe from both internal and external threats. If women in traditional contexts sometimes had to tolerate inappropriate use of violence by their husbands, they also benefited from appropriate use of violence in other situations.

In traditional societies with near universal male participation in warfare, political power is quite distributed. In such societies, it is also common for husbands to have authority over their wives that sometimes manifests in physical discipline. Early modern Europeans believed that physical discipline of wives by husbands was a right and sometimes a responsibility of husbands.

Laws against physical discipline of wives first started to appear during the Industrial Revolution. Laws prohibiting physical discipline within the family and social taboos against domestic violence intensified as the power and reach of the state continued to expand. It was not necessarily that the power of the *pater familias* declined at the same time the power of the state increased; rather, political power within the family transferred to the state.

This is not to deny that there was a genuine problem with physical abuse of women. The loss of disciplinary power by men has analogues to the loss of power by the clergy and aristocracy. As with the clergy and aristocracy,

Christianity had delegated men a large amount of power over their wives (perhaps due in part to the image of a male God), and like the clergy and aristocracy, they eventually abused this power extensively. Women, with very limited inheritance and property rights and no option for divorce, were in an extremely vulnerable position. The potential for abuse was extremely high, and the situation only became worse as women's economic leverage decreased with the Industrial Revolution.

This was one of the most common points discussed in early feminist literature; both Mill and Wollstonecraft, along with others, argued for women's independence from their husbands as a means to counter abuse. While the intention of preventing abuse is commendable, encouraging female independence actually served the development of the modern state in several ways.

In order to adopt more intensive forms of governance, the state needed more resources and more taxation. The population would not automatically accept more taxation, so it was necessary to reduce the capacity for resistance and increase willingness to consent. To this end, modern states sought to achieve a "monopoly on violence." If physical discipline or violence were tolerated without the permission of the state, it would make the family a sort of "state within a state."

Narratives about abusive men served to justify prohibiting all forms of violence by men, helping to establish a monopoly on violence. At the same time, becoming the protector of women allowed the state to justify increasing taxes on the large numbers of women entering wage labor. As the state took over the provision of both security and discipline from men, women's need and appreciation for men and masculinity began to decrease. This further weakened the family, and as the connection of individuals to families weakened, their connection with the state deepened.

One clear example of the value of male strength to women is wild animal attacks. In pre-modern Europe, there were a number of documented fatal wolf attacks; most of those killed were women and girls who were attacked by wolves when no men were around. These events are preserved in European folk and fairy tales, such as "Little Red Riding Hood" and "The Boy Who Cried Wolf." Likewise, warfare was a more visceral experience for pre-

modern populations. Merchants commonly carried weapons while transporting goods to defend against highway robbers and wild animals.

Political organization during this period revolved around country estates, towns and cities rather than a defined territory. All the inhabitants of a city (literally "citizens") might be called upon to defend the city during a siege. A German word used to describe middle class attitude, *Spießbürger*, (literally "pole citizen") originates from the fact that residents of towns were called upon to defend the city with sharpened wooden poles during attacks.

As women came to rely on the state for security rather than their husbands, even men who were authorized by the state to use violence became more reliant on machines and industry rather than physical strength. Instead of men directly protecting their communities, specialized militaries and police forces financed by elaborate tax bureaucracies began to take over this role. For most men, providing security became mainly a matter of financing the police and military— a task that women could do just as well, given a big enough salary.

If the rise of industrial manufacturing undermined the economic value of women, the rise of the modern state degraded the political value of men.

When it comes to choosing a spouse, men tend to look at physical beauty which reflects fertility. Women tend to find qualities like height, wealth, confidence, musculature, intelligence, and social status attractive in men— all of which reflect a man's ability to act as a provider and protector. When the political and economic utility of these attractive qualities is removed, attraction becomes purely about pleasure and enjoyment. This undermines the stability of relationships, because a bond based upon pleasure alone will lose its appeal as soon as something more pleasing comes along.

Feminism was a major force in bringing about this transformation. By encouraging women toward financial independence as a means of security, it encouraged women to reject the authority of husbands and to embrace the authority of the state instead. As legislation and changing norms opened up more opportunities for independent employment for women, the decline in the importance of marriage further isolated individuals from each other, deepening their dependence on the state and increasing the power of the state.

Justifying Growing State Power

The modern state depends both on the extreme inequality of the modern world order and heavy taxation. Neither of these are naturally agreeable to people. Most of the people living in "third world" conditions would prefer to either change the conditions they are living under, or escape to the West. Most people don't like paying as much as half their income in taxes. Yet, both of these are necessary for the maintenance of the modern state. One of the most important questions of the modern system, then, is how to convince people to accept these things.

Under liberalism, progress was the new basis of a government's legitimacy. The government no longer obtained consent to rule by means of scripture. The government's right to rule came from improvements to the condition of the people.

A narrative of oppression is very useful for this project. If people can be convinced that the past was miserable, it is easier to convince them that the current system represents an improvement to their condition. By supporting the spread of feminist principles and historical narratives, the state could position itself as the savior and protector of women from the abuses of men, and thus secure the loyalty and support of women. The horrific treatment of women in Europe in particular provided abundant material for constructing such narratives.

In considering how feminism is used to justify state power, it is worth considering some parallels to colonized peoples. Recalling that God was depicted as an ethnically European male, both women and colonized ethnicities with darker skin were a kind of "other." The treatment of both women and darker skinned ethnicities reflects the same underlying theological logic of striving to be more like the image of God.

In both the cases of women and the colonized, exploitation was justified as part of uplifting or "improving" them. Modern forms of government were first developed by major colonial powers like France, Britain and the United States. In the process of amassing the wealth necessary for developing the modern state, these powers severely disrupted societies around the world. Once they had established stable modern states, they then

pointed to the instability in colonized countries as evidence of inferiority, and set about trying to introduce modern political systems to these regions. In other words, colonizers introduced the disease and then started selling the cure.

The process with women was similar. The state enriched itself by enacting reforms which destroyed traditional livelihoods and undermined the integrity of marriage. This led to miserable conditions for women, including more domestic violence and miserable working conditions in factories. The state then positioned itself as the only force capable of introducing legal protections for women and social services. Again, they introduced the disease and then sold the cure.

Consider the similarities between the process of breaking down the family and the process of constructing the colonial world order.

Colonized peoples were part of somewhat localized and autonomous economies, and were then integrated into a larger, globalized system. In the new system, colonized peoples received low wages for providing cheap labor to the system, and instead of producing the goods they needed, became dependent on goods mass produced by globalized supply chains. When it came to the breakdown of the family in the West, women were originally part of relatively autonomous families and produced many of the goods they needed at home. They were then removed from the family and integrated into large corporations where they provided cheap labor, and ultimately became dependent on mass produced, taxable goods.

Bringing this type of "progress" to women and the colonized opened another major avenue for expanding state power— education. To "improve" the condition of women and the colonized, it was necessary to provide them with education to support their economic development. "Education" under the modern state was not necessarily so much about learning actual skills as it was about instilling principles and habits that made people good subjects of the state. Feminism, including historical narratives about "women's liberation," eventually became central to school curricula. For the colonized, education imparted ideas about the superiority of Western civilization. All of this reinforced the narrative of universal progress, which justified the state's right to rule.

From the perspective of a state seeking to expand its power, indoctrinating people with feminist narratives from an early age has clear benefits. Portraying women entering into traditionally male dominated professions as courageous pioneers and those who stay at home as oppressed and backward encourages women to enter the tax base. Likewise, portraying traditional marriage as an oppressive prison rather than a protective environment, and wage labor as liberation rather than a stressful environment filled with uncomfortable sexual undertones eventually became essential to maintaining modern economies and political systems.

The cheap but taxable labor of both women and colonized peoples was necessary to build up ever more centralized industrial infrastructure and supply chains, thus increasing the influence of the state and its tax revenues. Within the context of the theology of progress, this helped to reinforce the European image of God. Ethnically European men profited most from the labor of women and the colonized, and these men also developed the technologies hoped to bring salvation. Feminism was, in fact, part of this salvation. Technological advances "freed" women from many forms of domestic labor, enabling them to better strive to become equal to men.

The state, the colonial world order, and feminism eventually developed a tightly interwoven and mutually supportive relationship. Colonial wealth was necessary for developing the bureaucratic mechanisms of modern states. This wealth also helped to abolish traditional gender roles by building up new forms of industrial labor. Colonial wealth also helped to give people enough free time to develop feminist theory and historical narratives. Using this wealth and increased tax revenues, the state implemented legal reforms which put women in a position where they needed state protection, and then provided this protection in order to win their loyalty. Feminism in turn helped to justify state power, since only the state could protect women against the abuses of both husbands and industry. Feminism also eventually came to play an important role in maintaining the colonial order, as societies that adopted feminist principles moved to "liberate" women worldwide.

The power imbalance between colonized and colonizers is maintained by the belief that the colonized can one day become like the colonizers by serving the colonizers. The power of colonizers is maintained by the colonized purchasing imported products, pursuing university degrees in

colonial power centers, adopting modes of production dependent on technologies controlled by the colonizers, and so forth.

Likewise, men continue to dominate business and politics, but women are taught that this imbalance can be corrected with enough effort. However, the enviable heights that elite men have achieved actually depend on the labor of many ambitious and industrious women who believe that they are working toward gender equality.

Feminist history is vital to instilling women with this hope. Metrics of progress like a decreasing wage gap, more women holding political office, receiving advanced degrees, or working as business executives. These gains are celebrated as a great achievement of feminism, and validates the authority of governments that champion feminist principles. However, some studies show that this "progress" is not actually making women happier; one study of the subjective well-being of women found that women have become less happy despite more opportunities in the labor market and higher wages, both in absolute terms and relative to men.[81]

The reasons for this unhappiness are up for debate, but in any case, measuring progress in terms of metrics related to labor and economics rather than emotion and relationships is a typically male way of approaching the situation. This is a sign that despite adopting feminist principles, societies pursuing gender equality are shaped by predominantly male values. For women to enter into positions of power, they must assimilate to these values, which reinforces the dominance of a typically male mentality, even if more women hold positions of power. This also applies to colonized people who gain power and influence within colonizing societies. Ethnic Indians entering into the British parliament or even becoming Prime Minister never threatens the supremacy of liberal, British values, because Indians may only attain such positions by deeply internalizing British thought.

Despite the large-scale development of social norms, regulations, and laws based upon feminism, women remain very much an exploited underclass in a man's world. Herein lies a paradox of justifying government under the theology of progress; if the government is too successful in resolving people's problems, people could lose their desire for progress. The unhappiness that

---

[81] See *The Paradox of Declining Female Happiness* by Stevenson and Wolfers.

modern women struggling in the labor market feel is useful to the state as long as these women believe that the solution is more state-sponsored "progress."

The historical oppression of women, especially in Europe, is very real. What is questionable is if the modern state, including legislation and regulations based on feminist principles, has actually improved the condition of women, or if it has just substituted one form of oppressing and exploiting women for another. To question the idea that the modern state has improved the condition of women is heresy from the perspective of the theology of progress, as it directly threatens the basis for the state's power.

Sovereignty and the Quest for Omnipotence

The better a state could legitimize itself, the more power it could concentrate in its own hands. But where did this obsession with expanding the influence and reach of the state come from?

Concentrating power in the hands of nation-states was a continuation of the same process of centralizing power that began under the Church. Instead of claiming universality like the Church, the nation-state claimed a territorially bounded absolute authority known as "national sovereignty." The state became the ultimate sovereign over its territorial domain, just as the Church had been the ultimate sovereign over Christendom. While the Church claimed absolute sovereignty from God, the state claimed absolute sovereignty by means of popular will.

In his history of the nation-state, Walter Opello described the religious origin of the concept of absolute authority and sovereignty located in a worldly entity:

> ...locating authority in a symbolic body had a long history and resonance in Christianity and was recognizable by both Protestants and Catholics. Christians located authority in the human world in the body of Christ, who, as the son of God, had a dual nature. He was both flesh and blood and ethereal at the same time; that is, 'man and God.'[82]

[82] Walter Opello, *The Nation-State and the Global Order*

The nation-state thus became a claimant to absolute, divine authority just as the Church before it. The dual nature of man and God carried internal contradictions, however— humans are mortal and have limited power, while God is eternal and omnipotent. This meant that reality, as it were, constantly refuted Christian theology. The process of "improving" in the framework of the theology of progress was one way to cope with this contradiction by making humans ever more powerful.

The cathedrals of later days of the Church's dominance attest to this process. The architecture was not truly intended to inspire worshippers with the glory of God— indeed, the heavens and the earth would be sufficient for that. Rather, cathedrals, like most spectacular architecture, were intended to amplify the prestige of those who built them. The more spectacular the cathedral, the more plausible the Church's claim to divine authority became.

The nation-state took over the project of amassing power from the Church, but now each state became its own territorial bounded deity, harking back to the days when each city-state had its own patron god or goddess. This transformation is visible in architecture; pagan Greco-Roman aesthetics made a comeback in tandem with the development of the nation-state, indicating a revival of pagan ideals. Rather than a world defined by Christendom versus disbelief, each individual state became its own deity befriending, marrying, or warring with other gods, just like the gods and goddesses of classical pantheons.

These gods were not pure pagan deities, however— Europe had been too deeply affected by Christianity to ever go completely back to paganism. The new states operated according to Christian principles to some extent. Pagan deities were never imbued with qualities such as omnipotence or omniscience, but the nation-states of late Christianity sought after these attributes. Since they were first developed, nation-states have constantly developed more pervasive surveillance over and control of their subjects. In other words, these states, consistent with Christian ideals, constantly strive to become more like Christ— to actualize the theology of an omnipotent, omniscient divinity manifested in the human.

Power is a relation of submission, whereby one person willingly, by coercion, or a combination of both, submits to the will of another or others.

The modern state as a god was a representation of human will, and as such derived its power from humans. Since the human sat at the heart of this cosmology, the state acted as a nexus of desire; its power depended on its ability to fulfill the desires of the people. All desire can be reduced to two types; the desire to seek pleasure, or the desire to avoid pain. This meant that the state could increase its own power not only by fulfilling the desires of the people, but also by manufacturing new fears.

Feminism was a key element in amplifying and extending the power of the state in terms of both fear and desire. By putting more women in the workforce as independent earners, men and women had more exposure to each other, and instances of romantic and sexual attraction multiplied. More exposure to attractive men and women outside marriage weakened marriages by increasing the likelihood of extramarital affairs. With marriage weakened, women dependent on their husbands were at increasing risk of neglect, abuse, or abandonment. The state stood to benefit from this fear, as it could justify demands for taxation by taking over the protective role formerly filled by husbands.

As women sought to earn independent incomes, more and more eventually began to provide sexual services, not only as prostitutes, but also as dancers, waitresses, actresses, and singers. Feminism legitimated these activities as a kind of liberation, and a welcome means of escaping dependence on men. Since the state acted as a gatekeeper to financial prosperity by permitting or prohibiting different types of economic activity, increased availability of sexual pleasure for money increased the incentive to comply with the state's agenda.

Domestic violence and the state

Domestic violence, mainly in the form of physical violence of husbands toward their wives, plays a vital role in feminist literature. It is, as it were, one of feminism's main justifications for existing, especially in more recent history. Anyone who benefits from feminist reform (not only women, but also industry, the state, and finance) has an interest in portraying the history of domestic violence in ways that support feminist narratives.

Feminist narratives tend to assume that high rates of domestic violence were common throughout history, but it is very difficult to draw conclusions about historic rates of domestic violence. The topic has received relatively little attention because it was only fairly recently that it began to be seen as a serious problem.

It is not difficult to find evidence of *instances* of men beating their wives through history, but it is difficult to determine how common it actually was. Feminist historians point to laws which permitted physical discipline of wives as evidence for widespread domestic violence. In Roman law, it was even legal for a husband to kill his wife under certain circumstances. The number of documented instances of severe abuse is quite limited, however. Feminists argue that this lack of documentation is due to the normalization of abuse. Indeed, for most of European history, a man was considered to be within his rights in beating his wife. The famous British "rule of thumb" simply stated that he should use a stick no thicker than his thumb to avoid inflicting serious injury.

However, it is also possible that severe spousal abuse was relatively uncommon throughout history. This is a line of inquiry that most feminine historians prefer not to pursue, as it would undermine the narrative of historic oppression of women by men, not to mention harming the interests that the state has in such narratives. Historian Lawrence Stone argued that severe spousal abuse was relatively rare in the pre-modern period, but became more common after the Industrial Revolution. Feminist historian Linda Gordon argues that it was very widespread, but so normalized as to be very underreported. It is beyond the scope of this book to delve into this debate, but there are a number of factors which support the idea that domestic violence got worse after the Industrial Revolution.

First, consider one of the central arguments of this book; that women's economic position within traditional households would have deterred men from abusing their wives, both out of respect and appreciation and because of fear of her going on "strike," as it were. It is only logical that the economic marginalization of women would have led to more abuse, since the consequences of abuse would have become less impactful for men.

Second, modern trends and data can help us to draw conclusions about domestic violence in periods where less information is available. For

example, modern studies of domestic violence indicate that poverty, economic inequality, and alcohol consumption are all strongly correlated with increased violence toward women, and all three of these factors increased during the industrial revolution. Increased agricultural production resulted in more availability of grain which made alcohol cheaper and more available. Factory life was monotonous, dangerous, and stressful compared to traditional agrarian lifestyles, leading many workers to turn to alcohol to deal with physical and psychological pain.

The structure of industrial labor also removed a level of supervision that existed under the apprentice system. Before industrialization, a master craftsman and his apprentices usually lived in or near the workplace. Since excessive alcohol consumption affected productivity, master craftsmen would supervise and limit the alcohol consumption of workers. The rise of factory labor resulted in a mass of "working class" laborers who were more likely to consume alcohol without supervision from factory owners. Factory owners eventually supported the Temperance movement, a movement to totally ban alcohol, which saw significant support in both Europe and the United States in the 12th/19th and early 13th/20th centuries H/CE. This movement briefly succeeded in the United States during the prohibition era.

A number of prominent industrialists, including Henry Ford and S.S. Kresge, supported the movement out of concern about the effects of increasing alcohol consumption on laborers. Prohibition was first enacted in Detroit, America's industrial heart at the time. Since alcohol was so strongly associated with violence toward women, women's suffrage and the Temperance movement became closely connected. Many believed that banning alcohol would be an inevitable result of women gaining the right to vote due to the sheer numbers of women who were beaten by their drunken husbands.

Industrialization also led to higher levels of economic inequality. This is supported by a number of indicators, including real wages, family incomes, 'well-being', life expectancy, child mortality, calorie availability and nutrition, and average height.[83] As technology became more complex, so too

[83] Emma Griffin, *Diets, Hunger and Living Standards During the British Industrial Revolution*, *Past & Present*

did the social hierarchy involved in financing, producing, maintaining, and operating machinery and factories.

Low social status is associated with a number of adverse mental and physiological effects, including higher rates of heavy alcohol abuse. Alcohol abuse of this nature is strongly associated with wife battering in modern research.[84] Low social status, however, is always relative; the more intense social stratification becomes, the more "low" low social status becomes. In other words, people may be very content with what they have, but they can become dissatisfied if they are exposed to people who have much more than them. Considering the connection between social status, alcoholism, and domestic violence, it's only logical that violence against women would have increased during the Industrial Revolution.

Modern studies also show strong correlations between unemployment and domestic violence— when men are out of work, they are more likely to have violent conflict with their wives, and unemployed women are more likely to be victims of domestic violence. The phenomenon of mass unemployment first emerged after industrialization.[85]

All of these factors— women losing economic leverage, increasing inequality, increasing availability and consumption of alcohol, and boom and bust economic cycles, in a context where divorce was extremely legally difficult may have represented a low point for women in Western history. This increase in violence violence was one of the main triggers for the rise of feminism. The wave of violence that likely occurred around this time helped to fuel a general mistrust in the concept of patriarchy.

Women had lost their authority within the family through the decline in the importance of home industry and childrearing. Domestic violence provided a pretext for stripping men of their authority as well. Men and women then became equal members of the political body of the state. Since this process greatly increased the power of the state, the state had a clear interest in portraying traditional family structures as oppressive and backward. Feminism supported the state by providing a narrative that

---

[84] SE Collins, *Associations Between Socioeconomic Factors and Alcohol Outcomes*

[85] Bhalotra et al., *Domestic violence: the potential role of job loss and unemployment benefits*,

threatened women with horrific abuse if they ever left taxable wage labor in the public sphere.

Although the Industrial Revolution was likely especially bad for women, many feminist histories projected the high rates of domestic violence in this era onto all of history. This supports a total condemnation of patriarchy while simultaneously painting a picture of modernity as a unique historical achievement which greatly improved the condition of women and humanity. This in turn legitimates the dominance of both the modern state and European civilization.

The tendency of some feminist authors to universalize abuses that occurred under patriarchy is consistent with other critiques of class conflict. Karl Marx, for example, universalized his condemnation of the clergy, declaring religion in general to be a tool for the elite to exploit the poor. In reality, there is abundant evidence that earlier generations of the clergy and aristocracy truly lived austere lives of service to the poor, and that priests growing fat off the sweat of the poor became more common in later generations.

Feminists, like communists, believed that the power structures of the old European order were corrupt in and of themselves— not that the corruption represented a deviation from the original principles. Like communists, most feminists believe that the solution to this historical injustice could only be found in the state as an alternative to traditional power structures. The state's striving for ever greater levels of power would only be achieved, however, by gaining access to children. To get to the children, however, the state would have to first go through the mothers. Feminism would also play a critical role in this process.

Public Education: Industrialization of Feminine Labor

The strength and integrity of a nation-state depends to a large extent on how much its citizens identify with it. The more a citizen feels a part of the nation, the more willing they will be to make sacrifices for the sake of the nation. European nations went through lengthy processes of homogenization to

achieve strong and cohesive national identities. In Britain, centuries of war suppressed Gaelic cultures in Scotland, Ireland, and Wales and imposed uniform use of the English language. The French state crushed regional languages such as Breton, Occitan, Provencal, Basque, and Alsatian and replaced them with standard French. In colonies such as Australia and America, the state took native children from their parents and sent them to boarding schools where they were prohibited from speaking their native languages. This also helped to create a strong homogenous national identity.

With the demise of Christianity as a unifying principle of government, nationalism emerged as the prime secular alternative for building collective identity. Nationalism was far from natural; rather, it had to be imposed with great effort. By contrast, kinship based identity tends to occur quite naturally based on human family relationships. The rise of nationalism represented a shift to identities which were derived first through an individual's relationship to the state. Thus, a zero-sum game formed between the state and the family— the more a person identified with their family, the less they would identify with the state, and vice versa.

A child deeply embedded in family structures sees themself more clearly reflected in their relatives because of the genetic proximity, reinforcing their sense of belonging in the kinship group. By contrast, a child in a daycare or schoolhouse with more distantly related children of the same age will not identify so strongly with their peer group, and will instead come to identify with whatever labels are placed on the group they are in.

Public schooling and daycare schemes were an inevitable result of more women working full time jobs. While women in home industries could work and care for children at the same time, this was rarely the case in factories. This resulted in a reduction in the amount of influence mothers had over their children, which effectively disempowered women and empowered the state. This loss of power was not only in terms of ideological influence; children can also play a role in household power dynamics, and stronger relationships between mothers and children mean that children will be more likely to support their mother.

Strong nation-states require a high degree of ideological homogeneity, and the more influence mothers have over children, the more difficult it is for the state to standardize the population. For example, spending

more time with a mother could deepen regional ethnic or linguistic identities that undermined national unity. Reducing the influence of mothers and replacing it with institutions under the state's control helped to concentrate and consolidate state power.

Loss of influence over children was not the only way that the nation-state, nationalism, and nationalistic consciousness harmed women. Nation-states, unlike kinship groups, are not usually dependent on lineage, and this undermines one of women's greatest assets— the capacity to bear children. The nation-state, unlike kinship based groups, can replenish its ranks by immigration or assimilating conquered populations. Childrearing and strong family relationships, on the other hand, are essential for the health of kinship-based groups. As a result, women and the chastity of women are much less significant for the integrity of the nation-state than they are for the integrity of an extended family or tribe.

Public schools conformed to the general logic of industrialization. The movement of children through public schools was similar to the movement of materials through a factory— one teacher would work on a group of children, and then they would move to another in a systematic, standardized fashion. Children were eventually sorted according to grading schemes. School grades were originally inspired by industrial sorting processes, where the quality of goods would be labelled as grade A, B, and so forth.

Efficiency gains were achieved by applying mass production techniques to childrearing. Rather than one mother caring for and educating a few children, one woman could be employed by the state to care for 30 or more children at a time. At the same time, the mothers of the children would work in wage labor. In this way, the state helped to increase the profitability of industry by providing childcare services, increasing tax revenues and molding children to be compliant subjects of the state at the same time.

Rising prominence of public schooling also helped to make other family services taxable. In traditional family settings, it was typical for the elderly to help care for children and for children to help care for the elderly. With the decline of this arrangement, the state began to provide more pension schemes to maintain social stability and foster loyalty to the state. This made care for children and the elderly taxable, further increasing state integration

into the service economy and tax revenues. This also applied industrial logic to care for the elderly; instead of children and parents working together to care for grandparents, a few (usually female) workers might care for ten or twenty elderly people.

This continued breakdown of family ties greatly benefited the state, just as earlier individualization of society had benefited the Church. Feminism was essential to continuing this process. By encouraging women to become financially independent, feminism made women more willing to give their children over to governmental educational institutions.

The State-Industry Nexus

Early on in the Industrial Revolution, cooperation between state and industry at first had mostly negative effects on women, mainly by displacing rural populations from the land and putting them to work in harsh factory conditions. Later on, however, state-industry cooperation became one of the most important domains for feminist praxis.

At first the state helped to push women into industry with laws that disrupted traditional modes of production and left women with few options other than factory labor. However, conditions were initially so bad that the state had to intervene to prevent social instability and declining overall economic productivity due to health and safety issues. Feminism was part of making mass participation of women in the formal labor force more sustainable by making conditions more bearable.

Feminist policies implemented by the state thus eventually became vital to the growth of industry. Since, the state depended on industry for tax revenues to implement these reforms, the growth of industry was also vital to the growth of the state. Feminism, industry, and the state thus formed a mutually interdependent complex upon which the modern world is built.

Early modern states implemented a number of policies for the benefit of industry. One of the first was evicting people from communal land, and converting the land to private ownership, to the benefit of the wealthy and industrialists. The state also sometimes leveraged the mass displacement of the rural population that followed to the benefit of industry. One such policy

in England, which pioneered the Western model of industrialization, was the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1234 H/1839 CE. Prior to the amendment, impoverished married men received stipends to supplement low wages. As the number of impoverished men increased, this became too expensive. To decrease expenses, the amendment abolished this financial support, and instead required that aid be made available exclusively through state-sponsored "workhouses."

The intent of the amendment was to deliberately make the workhouses so miserable that only the most desperate poor would accept to live in them, thereby increasing the motivation of the poor to participate in the labor market. An additional goal was to move rural poor to urban areas where there was more demand for labor. Under this scheme, the poor would be confined to workhouses and forced to work. The miserable conditions in these houses, which featured prominently in Charles Dickens' novel *Oliver Twist,* indeed had the effect of increasing the poor's motivation to find work. In addition to being confined to the workhouse and forced to work, inmates were given small rations of low quality food, and men were separated from their wives and children.

This system was eventually reformed decades later after the Andover workhouse scandal in 1261 H/1845 CE, in which a corrupt workhouse master was caught sexually abusing female inmates and embezzling food meant for inmates. Conditions in the Andover workhouse reached the point where inmates resorted to eating rotten bones meant to be used as fertilizer. Although the workhouse system was eventually reformed, it had the effect of bringing many women into the formal labor force, since displacement from the land and the end of welfare allowances forced many families to choose between sending women to work or going into the horrific workhouses.

A report on the Poor Law Amendment described its effects as driving the poor "to unknown energy and searching for work. This is very striking by the great addition of females working abroad." The report further notes that "the custom of the mother of a family carrying her infant with her in its cradle into the field, rather than lose the opportunity of adding her earnings to the general stock, though partially practised before, is becoming very much more general now." In order to quiet infants while the mothers were working, the

use of "Gregory's Cordial," an opium-containing tonic, increased.[86] Many infants died as a result of opium consumption during this period while others developed permanent disabilities.[87]

This policy increased the profits of wealthy landowners and industrialists by forcing women into the formal labor market. This not only decreased labor costs for industrialists, but also decreased the collective bargaining power of laborers, improving the position of industrialists. Reducing welfare expenditure via the Poor Law Amendment was also intended to help lower the tax burden on landowners and industrialists, since they provided most of the funding for welfare programs.

Industrialists supported the state by facilitating taxation, since large enterprises were much easier to tax than families. More importantly for the growth of the state, formal, large-scale labor and industry eventually enhanced the state's ability to monitor and control economic processes, which was key to the growth. From the perspective of the state, the family as a productive unit was an impediment to the exercise of both surveillance and control. Families were far more opaque than factories and large farms. It was easier to monitor the output of factories than the output of mothers working in the privacy of their homes. More data allowed the state to implement different policies and measure their outcomes in order to enhance productivity and tax revenue. This was key to implementing empirical, scientific methodologies in both government and industry. Privacy was a clear impediment to the progress on which the moral legitimacy of the modern state depended, so it was necessary to push women into the public sphere by whatever means possible.

The development of the Western medical industry provides another example of state-industry collusion. This was built partly on Christian misogyny, since Protestant destruction of traditional medical institutions helped lay the groundwork for industrial medicine and the welfare state's takeover of medical care. State regulations on medicine and care provision gave an advantage to large-scale producers who could bear the costs of regulatory compliance. State regulations pushed smaller producers out of the

---

[86] Ivy Pinchbeck, *Women Workers in the Industrial Revolution*
[87] J. Brian, *Opium and infant-sedation in 19th century England*

market, sometimes by forcibly preventing them from preparing and selling medicines.

Much regulation was aimed at combating quackery and unsafe medicines, but medical regulation also led to the formation of a medical "orthodoxy" which derived great benefits from the state. The orthodox class of medical practitioners was initially exclusively male and generally from the upper classes, while marginalized herbalists mostly came from rural populations and lower classes and included many women. The state supported the growth of centralized, male-dominated pharmaceutical and medical industries, and these industries in turn supported the state with tax revenue and data about the population.

The growth of increasingly centralized industries, powered in part by the increasing role of women in the formal labor force, also supported the political ambitions of European states in their colonies. The state and industry collaborated to flood the markets of colonies with manufactured goods. Colonial regulations and education encouraged the use of imported products, including agricultural commodities, textiles, machinery, and medicine. This weakened resistance in the colonies by destroying local industries, including manufacturing knowledge, traditional education, and economic networks. Once dependence on imported products was established, colonizers could more easily obtain the raw materials and labor they needed from the colonies. Once patterns of dependence were deeply entrenched enough, colonial powers could even withdraw their direct presence and nominally grant "independence" to their colonial possessions.

Colonial economic models generally replicated the European experience of industrialization by displacing people from the land and replacing subsistence agriculture with large scale production of export crops. At the same time, colonial authorities flooded markets with cheap manufactured goods, making it difficult for women to compete and ultimately reducing their economic power. This replicated the patterns of female labor that developed during the Industrial Revolution, as well as the increased consumer demand and cheap labor. It also generated a need for feminism.

As modern states developed more mechanisms for taxation and controlling economic activity, they developed new tools for exerting influence on colonies in partnership with industry, such as subsidies, preferential trade

agreements, and infrastructure development loans. All of these tools of soft power depended on capital surpluses derived through increased taxation. Much of this additional revenue came from women entering into the formal labor force.

Wealth flowing in from the colonies as a result of state-industry cooperation was ultimately vital for industry to develop technologies that supported feminist goals, such as birth control and home appliances. Increased tax revenue from industry allowed the state to build out its bureaucracy, and develop legislation and social services that supported feminist goals.

The worse relations between men and women became, the more powerful the state could become, since the state was positioned as the protector of women. While inventions like the washing machine were hailed as a great tool for women's liberation, they also reduced men's need for women, making it easier for men to womanize or abuse women. And while social safety nets like state support for divorcees and single mothers were ostensibly meant to support women, they also made it much easier for women to walk away from a marriage rather than putting in the effort to make it work. More divorce in general supported industry by increasing overall consumption, since more isolated people consume more.

Feminism ultimately would come to depend very highly on the power of the modern state. Later core feminist reforms like opening formal education to girls and women, mandated maternity leave, equal pay laws, stipends for single mothers, birth control, anti-discrimination legislation, gender quotas, and protections against sexual harassment in the workplace all depended on a large government budget and elaborate social welfare system. Almost everything that the family could provide to women— food, clothing, shelter, security, and even a sense of self-worth, value, and acceptance— could be provided by the alliance of state and industry, reducing family to a consumer preference rather than a fundamental building block of society.

Privacy and Bringing Women into the Public Sphere

The difficulty of factory life and the industrial economy drove working class women into the arms of the state, since only the state could deliver women from the predicament it had created. It's no coincidence that the early feminist movement overlaps heavily with the labor rights movement. For example, early British feminists Caroline Norton and Elizabeth Barrett Brown campaigned for both labor rights and women's rights, as did American suffragette Susan B. Anthony.[88]

The Triangle Shirtwaist factory fire of 1329 H/1911 CE is one of the most stark examples of how bad conditions for women were during industrialization. At the time, it was common for factory owners to lock women in work rooms to prevent them from taking breaks. When a fire engulfed the 8th, 9th, and 10th floors of the Triangle Shirtwaist factory, the doors were locked and the women working inside were unable to escape the flames. As many as 62 women jumped out of the windows to escape the flames, falling to their deaths on the street. A total of 146 people, including 123 women and girls, died in the accident. The dramatic imagery of dozens of women leaping to their deaths caused widespread shock and horror.

Advocates for women's labor rights had been campaigning against the policy of locking female workers in factories for some time before this, so the incident energized and gave credence and publicity to their advocacy. Some of these campaigners used the publicity they gained through the incident to campaign for women's right to vote. Clara Lemlich, a member of the women's movement and a labor rights campaigner at the time wrote:

[88] Alma Lutz, *Susan B. Anthony: Rebel, Crusader, Humanitarian*.

> The manufacturer has a vote; the bosses have votes; the foremen have votes; the inspectors have votes. The working girl has no vote. When she asks to have the building in which she must work made clean and safe, the officials do not have to listen. The bosses can say to the officials 'Our votes put you in office... Never mind what they say... They can't do anything.' That is true. For until the men in the legislature in Albany represent her as well as the bosses and foremen, she will not get fair conditions. That is why the working woman now says that she must have the vote.[89]

Women were able to reclaim some of the power they once had in the family by means of participation in public politics. With the ongoing individualization of society, this was a matter of dire necessity, as it became increasingly difficult for women to find security in family or marriage. While this was a response to a clear need, it also served the interests of the state in a number of ways.

One of the biggest obstacles to the growth of state power in the West was the concept of privacy. Early modern taxes depended mainly on import tariffs, but income taxes were extremely unpopular and difficult to implement due to concerns about privacy. The first British income tax was enacted during the Napoleonic wars but repealed soon after. There was massive public opposition to the tax from all sectors of society; one London petition complained that the tax was an "odious, arbitrary, and detestable inquisition into the most private concerns and circumstances of individuals."[90]

Especially when economic activity occurred within the family, assessing the income of individuals and families would be a very intrusive process. The state thus had an interest in breaking down families from two angles. First, the more people lived in the public sphere, the more comfortable they would become with the state knowing about their activities. Secondly, the weaker the family became as a source of security, the more people would have to rely on the state for, and the stronger the justification for taxation would become.

---

[89] Clara Lemlich, *The Inside of a Shirtwaist Factory*.
[90] Henry Miller, *The 1816 Repeal of Income Tax*

A Deeper Look at First Wave Feminism

Feminist histories tend to focus much more on what women gained through feminist social reforms than on what was lost. It is true that women gained more power within the apparatus of the state by means of political participation, but they lost the power and protections they once had in the family at the same time.

Likewise, feminist history focuses on the negatives of male authority within families, emphasizing stories of women trapped in abusive, loveless marriages with no way to escape. However, a strong prohibition on marital infidelity and divorce also provided many women with stable relationships, protection, and social welfare. Just as women eventually consented to an increasingly invasive and domineering state because of the protection and social welfare it provided, it is plausible that women consented to the authority of husbands because of the protection and social welfare they provided.

This does not mean that women became any more free or independent. Rather, they traded authority of a father or husband for abstract institutional authority. Given that politics and economics both operated according to a very masculine logic, this was not really any less a form of male domination. Men, on the other hand, did become more free, since they were released from many social expectations related to the care of women. With the decline of moral rules about sex outside marriage, men were free to move from woman to woman without taking responsibility for any of them.

The legal right to political participation was a specific kind of "equality." It meant that women were entering into a world which had been shaped by male sensibilities for centuries, if not millennia. Why was "equality" not defined as granting men equal participation in the private or domestic sphere? Because there was an implicit assumption that the domestic sphere was of lesser value. Serving the state by participating in politics was liberation, while serving the family by staying in the home was considered a form of bondage.

The male character of the public sphere made it a hostile environment for women, and entering into this hierarchy became a battle.

Much of the conventional history of feminism describes this struggle. Until the present day, many women who enter into positions of power feel a heavy pressure to "prove themselves" of being as capable as men. The pressure to adopt male characteristics is such that female politicians and businesswomen often wear clothing with shoulder pads in order to make themselves appear more masculine.

In a purely legal sense, suffrage brought a number of gains to women, but it also placed additional responsibilities on them. While it undeniably expanded women's political rights, suffrage required a number of women to engage in stressful public debates, election campaigns, and spend time studying political issues. Political involvement thus reduced the time available for homemaking activities essential for keeping a family happy and whole.

One argument brought against women's suffrage is that political participation would cause women to stop marrying, and cause the human race to die out.[91] Many in modern times consider this laughable, but the reality is that democracies where women have full political participation are currently facing serious demographic crises due to low birth rates.

As political participation of women has increased, the size, integrity and importance of families has decreased, and the size, power, and importance of the state has increased. The Western view of history is both materialistic and individualistic; this worldview focuses on individual, quantifiable indicators of progress such as income and the number of women in positions of authority, without considering things like the emotional quality of life and integrity of families and communities.

From an emotional (and perhaps more feminine) perspective, the state and its impersonal bureaucracy is a poor substitute for a strong marriage or family. The state may be able to provide food, shelter, clothing, and security as well or better than men, but it cannot provide the sense of emotional support and love of a loyal husband. It cannot bond with a woman through the experience of having and raising children together.

From a male perspective, mass political participation of women meant more opportunities to enjoy the beauty of women, flirt with them, and initiate extramarital relationships. Extramarital sex in the workplace and

---

[91] Diane Atkinson, *Votes for Women*

illegitimate children resulting thereof were already increasing in frequency, and women's participation in public political life further amplified this trend. While it's impossible to say to what extent the relationship was causal, women's political participation increased in parallel with rising divorce rates. Increased rates of extramarital sex in turn increased demand for reform to divorce laws, abortion, and contraception.

Looking at the development of Western governance over centuries, empowering women to be what Aristotle called "political animals" was actually part of the same project of dismantling the family undertaken by the Church. Giving women the same legal and political rights as men was a concrete step in dismantling traditional hierarchies, which would pave the way for new legislation. This legislation marked the second wave of feminism, and included laws that legalized abortion, made it easier for women to divorce, and mandated better pay for women and less workplace discrimination. The politicians pushing this legislation through had popular mandates from largely female electorates.

The decline of the family as a protective factor forced women to enter politics, but entry into politics further accelerated the decline of the family. More contact between men and women in the public sphere increased the incidence of extramarital relationships, weakening marriages. Legislation such as legalized abortion reduced the consequences of pregnancies outside marriage, making it even easier to have extramarital affairs and further weakening families. The continued decline of the family, in turn, demanded more political participation by women.

The Male Character of the Public Sphere

Feminist histories often characterize feminism as the process of women striving for and achieving greater participation in the "public sphere," or the domain of political discourse. The concept of a "public sphere" was popularized by political theorist Jürgen Habermas, who defined it as a space where:

- All citizens have access.

- The formation of public opinion occurs.
- Assembly is unrestricted.
- Debate over governing rules occurs.

The idea of the public sphere is core to the theory of democracy and liberalism in general, because it relates to the importance of freedom of speech and freedom of association in a society that governs itself through dialogue. Democracy's claim to superiority is that diverse groups within a society can peacefully share political power and negotiate dispute resolution without violently imposing their will on each other.

The conventional narrative tells us that the public sphere was the exclusive domain of men, and that women then fought for their right to participate in it, such that we can now find many female journalists, lawmakers, writers and intellectuals— progress! However, considering the definition of the public sphere, we find that the traditional sphere in which women lived had many of the attributes of the public sphere. Women had significant political and economic power by means of their role in home industries. They assembled, discussed governing rules (especially as it related to households), and formed opinions among themselves. They may not have had free access to male assemblies, but neither did men have free access to female assemblies. Yet in both male and female assemblies the formation of public opinion occurred, as well as debate over governing rules.

It may be more appropriate to term what has been called the public sphere as the "masculine sphere", and the private or domestic sphere as the "feminine sphere." From this perspective, the entry of women into the masculine (or public) sphere is a byproduct of the destruction of the feminine (or domestic) sphere. This means that the supposed victories of first wave feminism can actually be seen as a continuation of Christian hostility toward the feminine. Women may have accessed greater rights and protections in this way, but this was conditioned on entering into institutions (such as parliaments) that were originally developed by men, for men.

The governmental institutions of the West, such as parliaments, judicial system, and social services, emerged in large part from the Church, which had become increasingly male dominated with time. Since the clergy was dominated by men to a much greater extent than the family, male

psychology profoundly shaped the development of these institutions. Men continued to shape the foundational logic of the state and almost all public institutions until suffrage. When women were finally admitted to these institutions, they were only allowed to do so on the basis of their adopting mannerisms and styles of thought and speech typical of men. This led to the gradual demonization of historically feminine attributes like shyness, meekness, and submissiveness. Instead, women's success and status depended on being assertive, opinionated, fiery, and dynamic.

This process of "masculinization" is also visible in education. In modern education, men and women receive identical instruction and opportunities, but there are nonetheless significant gender differences in both aptitude and interest. In academia, men continue to dominate physical science and engineering despite many well-funded programs seeking to increase female participation in these fields. Degrees in psychology, education, and humanities are much more popular with women than men, but there are no major initiatives aiming to increase male enrollment in these faculties. Policy initiatives pushing women into physical sciences can also be seen as a push toward masculinization, or making women more like men. Although this is framed as "empowerment" in feminist narratives, it could just as easily be seen as an assault on femininity.

Consider also the amount of feminist discourse devoted to putting women into positions of political and corporate leadership, and the amount focused on getting men to be more engaged in housework and child rearing. Feminist discourse focuses heavily on putting women into positions of public authority, but interest in promoting men's participation in the domestic sphere is comparatively limited. Although paternity leave is becoming more common in countries with strong feminist influence, no one will suggest that a man give up or delay career development or political participation to raise children, and yet there is tremendous pressure on women to give up or delay having children for the sake of their education and career prospects.

Surveys show that men are more interested in politics than women by a wide margin— a survey in *The Economist* found that among British, university educated adults, approximately 37% more men than women were interested in politics. If women, generally speaking, are less interested in politics than men, why is there such a push to ensure that there are as many

female politicians as male? Still, much feminist discourse treats gender gaps in politics as a problem needing correction.

A materialistic state striving toward omnipotence and omniscience has an interest in shifting the population toward behaviors and attitudes typical of the masculine sphere, because the masculine sphere is more accessible to state surveillance and taxation than the domestic sphere, so it can give the state what it needs to grow— knowledge and power. As women move into the public sphere, much domestic labor is taken over by immigrant laborers. Thus, citizens are empowered while devalued "feminine" labor is relegated to the "other" — non-citizens.

Motivating women to engage with politics is also in the interest of the state because it supports the legitimacy of the state. Especially in democratic nations like the ones where feminism originates, the power of elections to legitimate state power depends on voter turnout.

Inside of this process is the basic template of the theology of progress. This view holds history to be a linear progress of striving toward a goal— salvation and union with the divine. Economic growth and technological development are part of working toward that goal, and empowering the state is necessary to foster this development. Since men contribute more to economic growth and technological development, they represent a higher stage of development toward which women must strive, so that women too can better contribute to the grand vision of progress and become true equals to men.

Although feminism appeared to be a radical departure from traditional Christianity, increasing female participation in the masculine sphere was actually a continuation of Western Christianity's tradition of devaluing the feminine and deifying the masculine. It was not that the masculine sphere expanded to accommodate while leaving the feminine sphere intact; rather, the masculine sphere expanded by means of the destruction of family relationships and home industry, replacing them with institutionalized relationships under the control and surveillance of the state.

Chapter 8

Money and Finance

Finance was key to building the modern political and economic system, and like state and industry, finance developed a symbiotic relationship with feminism. This symbiosis was partly due to finance powering state and industry, but finance also directly shaped and was shaped by modern gender roles.

The effect of a society's method of creating and distributing money and credit on gender relations is less obvious than the role of industry and government, but it has a subtle and profound effect on almost every decision a person makes. On all levels of society, from the decisions of private companies to educational institutions to governments, the availability of credit shapes the contours of human life.

The development of the modern banking sector, just as the development of industry and government, has deep theological roots. One of the most significant shifts defining the rise of the modern system was the legalization of interest, which had been prohibited in Europe for nearly a thousand years on religious grounds.

Like the industry and the state, banking institutions had a strong interest in increasing the number of women working in wage labor as opposed to the home. Banks are essentially businesses that deal with money, and the more people depend on families and home production, the less they will depend on money.

Prior to the decline of the household as a site of production, both men and women had significant economic power, but women's power was typically in non-monetized goods and services, while men were mainly responsible for handling cash. As with other modern reforms, feminism was a process of women becoming more like men by leaving behind home production to focus on going out and earning wages.

Feminism did more than just increase dependence on the monetized economy by encouraging women to work. By encouraging women to be independent of their husbands, it also broke down family relationships,

undermining non-monetized home industry based on interdependence of husbands and wives. This boosts consumer spending by reducing the amount of goods produced in the home and by leaving an emotional void that people seek to fill through consumption.

Feminist reforms did not so much make women truly independent, but rather shifted their dependence from family to finance, weakening families and strengthening finance in the process.

The Nature of Credit

As an institution, the family competes with industry in terms of production, the state in terms of political power, and with finance in terms of credit creation. The power to issue credit is very valuable in a modern economy, because most money is created by means of credit. Finance, then, is a natural ally to state and industry, as all three share an interest in decreasing the size and cohesion of the family.

` Credit, in its essence, is trust, and trust is the basis of any relationship. Relationships involve giving and taking, and at times, the balance will shift so that one party has given more than the other. Trust allows the relationship to continue on the understanding that each party will make up for the imbalance later on.

Trust is as important in families as it is in business ventures. For example, parents care for a child for an extended period of time without any immediate profit from doing so; they trust, however, that the child will help and support them when they get older. Extended families or tribes often work in a way quite similar to the modern financial industry; for example, they might pool money to cover the cost of an accident (like the insurance industry) or to help a relative start up a business venture (like commercial banks). These credits and debts may not be explicitly recorded, but rather informally noted through dialogue or other forms of social relations. Credit within kinship groups often doesn't involve money at all, but rather labor or services.

In traditional settings, women often play an important role by keeping track of the status of relationships with other members of an extended kinship group. Relationships with kin may change based on the

nature of goods and services shared within a kinship group or community, and the range of human emotion allows for much more qualitatively rich forms of accounting than purely numerical monetary measures. Activities like assisting with childcare, providing help during an illness, sharing food, or attesting to someone's character during a dispute may generate different shades of love, loyalty, and affection.

Similarly, abusive behavior, taking advantage of others, rudeness, and deceit may inspire varying degrees of hatred, anger, or disgust. Some ventures may be better suited to quantitative accounting, while qualitative accounting might be more appropriate in other cases. Some goods or services have a monetary value, but may also contain a qualitative dimension. Child care, for example, has a fixed hourly value, but a relative may put special attention into the care, and this extra value can be hard to quantify.

One of the ways that qualitative accounting manifests is in reputation. If someone has a good reputation, it means they have good standing in a community. If we consider this as a function of credit creation, women chatting about who did what in order to raise or lower a person's reputation in a community takes on a very important functional role.

Higher levels of trust enable bigger productive ventures, because more trust facilitates more coordination. A classic example from American history is rural "barn raising," where a community would come together for a day or two to construct the barn for a single family. This was typically unpaid, communal labor, carried out with a general understanding that the family who received assistance would reciprocate by helping other community members build a barn later on. This applies in the formal economy as well; large scale corporate ventures depend on strong rule of law.

Credit also played an important role in traditional warfare when it came to distributing spoils of war, including land, livestock, and slaves. A warband or army would trust in the justice of their leader to distribute the spoils of war equitably and in proportion to the contribution of each participant in a battle or raid. The reputation of a leader would thus be an important determinant of his ability to raise an army. Participants in the army might need to contribute their own resources to a venture, including weapons, riding animals, food, and recruits. This dynamic still exists in the modern world through tax contributions. Taxpayers contribute funds (sometimes for

war or policies that are complementary to war) on the understanding that they will eventally receive a return on their payment in the form of various services and benefits from the state. Thus, collecting taxation depends on trust in what the state will provide in the future as well as fear of punishment for non-payment.

Humans are social beings that depend on each other, so as credit markets developed, we cannot necessarily say that people began to *owe* more. *Owing* someone is only representative of some favor rendered which has not yet been reciprocated, and this is a feature of almost every human relationship. The development of the modern era signified the expansion of *monetized* debt, or debts that were denominated in money. It is not that humans began to depend on each other more, but rather that more of this dependence started to be recorded as monetary debt.

When trying to understand this process, the concept of "surface area" can be helpful for understanding human relationships. Each individual has a finite capacity to connect and form bonds with other individuals. If a person is completely embedded in family and religious social networks, their entire "surface area," or potential for social relations, is occupied by relationships defined in terms of kinship and religion. These networks contain credit; if a person continuously receives help and support from their family and religious community, but always refuses to help others, eventually he will go "bankrupt," and his relatives or coreligionists will become less willing to provide him with help and support.

The rise of the financial sector required transferring credit relationships from informal networks to formal, monetized networks. For example, in a traditional marriage, a husband brings food to his wife, and she cooks it for him. The husband provides goods and the wife provides a service, but there is a delay involved in the exchange. For a brief period the wife becomes a debtor, because she has received food, and the husband has to trust that she will cook the food, thereby repaying the debt. As with all debts, this requires trust between the creditor and the debtor.

The husband must trust that the wife will prepare the food and not burn it, throw it away, or let a cat steal it. If the cooking is very excellent or time-consuming, the value of the preparation may exceed the value of ingredients; in such a case, the wife must trust that the husband will repay this

debt by bringing more or better quality food in the future which will eventually cover the balance.

In a modern context, this relationship could become part of a monetized credit network. A man and woman go out on a date together to a restaurant where they use bank notes to pay the bill. The bank notes represent a debt; the cook in the kitchen is paid in bank notes, and he trusts that he will be able to use the bank notes to pay his rent and bills. The relationship of trust is transferred to the financial system.

This context is necessary to understand how the transformation of the financial system would impact gender relations by impacting gendered credit relationships. As the economy shifted toward monetization, women were put at an increasing disadvantage for two reasons:

1) As money became more and more essential for every aspect of life, the value of men relative to women increased, since men received bigger salaries than women.
2) The services provided by women via informal credit networks in the context of the family faced more competition as similar services became increasingly available for money.

One of the main focus points of modern feminism is the wage gap between men and women, summarized by the slogan "Equal pay for equal work." As more and more services were monetized, women had to obtain more money, both because their work was becoming less valuable relative to that of men, and because they needed money to obtain goods and services that were no longer available in the home. This meant that women had to find new ways to monetize traditional feminine domains of labor, intensifying the cycle of monetization. In this way, the financial industry gradually replaced traditional credit networks.

The Legalization of Usury

The influence of the financial industry was a major factor in pushing women into wage labor and generating a need for feminism, and like other

driving factors behind the development of feminism, religious influences shaped the development of finance. One of the most influential developments driving the rise of monetization was the legalization of interest.

For most of its history, Christianity prohibited charging interest on loans. The growth of the moneylending class, which would later develop into the modern financial sector, was initially dominated by Jews. This has scriptural roots. The Torah stipulates:

> Do not charge a fellow Israelite interest, whether on money or food or anything else that may earn interest.
>
> You may charge a foreigner interest, but not a fellow Israelite, so that the LORD your God may bless you in everything you put your hand to in the land you are entering to possess.[92]

Christianity's total prohibition on lending with interest left a gap in the market for Jews. The Christian-controlled European guild system banned Jews from most professions, further increasing the appeal of interest banking as a profession for Jews.

A number of rabbinical authorities throughout Jewish history have taken highly permissive interpretations of relations with non-Jews, though by no means do all modern Jews hold such views. However, the beliefs and attitudes that stem from these interpretations have been a major influence on relations between Jews and non-Jews. These relations also had a significant impact on the development of modern financial institutions, and therefore the institutional roots of feminism.

For example, the Talmud states that if a non-Jew falls into life threatening danger, it is not allowed for a Jew to save him through means like lifting him out of a well. Rather, the Jew is required to leave him to die.[93] Similarly, for a Jew to murder a non-Jew is not considered a crime which is punishable by a Jewish court, although it may be considered a sin.[94] The prohibition on adultery does not apply to non-Jews according to the Talmud,

---

[92] Deuteronomy, 23:19-20

[93] Tractate *'Avodah Zarah*, p26b

[94] Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah*, 'Laws on Murderer' 2, 11; *Talmudic Encyclopedia*, 'Goy'

but for a Jewish man to have sex with a non-Jewish woman is viewed as akin to bestiality.[95] It is not considered a violation of the rights of the woman's husband, because "There is no matrimony for a heathen." This does not mean that a Jew is allowed to have sex with a non-Jewish woman, but if he does, "she must be killed, as is the case with a beast, because through her a Jew got into trouble."[96]

These provisions of traditional Talmudic law indicate a general lack of regard for the value of non-Jews, or an attitude of treating them like animals to be exploited for the benefit of Jews. Rules on interest-bearing loans reflect this attitude; it is considered as something generally harmful, and so prohibited among Jews, but allowed when it comes to non-Jews. This sentiment was openly expressed by the controversial Sephardic Jewish leader Ovadia Yosef, who was at one point the Sephardic Chief Rabbi of Israel. Yosef stated:

> Goyim (non-Jews) were born only to serve us. Without that, they have no place in the world – only to serve the People of Israel. In Israel, death has no dominion over them. With gentiles, it will be like any person— they need to die, but [God] will give them longevity. Why? Imagine that one's donkey would die, they'd lose their money. This is his servant. That's why he gets a long life, to work well for this Jew. Why are gentiles needed? They will work, they will plow, they will reap. We will sit like an effendi and eat. That is why gentiles were created.[97]

This is in general keeping with the concept that Jews are the chosen people of God, giving them a special status above the rest of humanity. Lending money with interest can easily lead to a kind of "debt-slavery," where debtors are caught in cycles of interest payments without being able to pay down the principal. This gave rise to a persistent stereotype of Jewish moneylenders as

---

[95] Tractate *Berakhot*, p78a.

[96] Maimonides, op cit, 'Prohibitions on Sexual Intercourse' 12, 10; *Talmudic Encyclopedia*, 'Goy'

[97] Saturday sermon, October 2010

a kind of parasitic class which profited off the labor of others without doing any work themselves.

Jewish money lenders faced considerable opposition, sometimes as a result of monarchs who were unable to pay their debts. In England, a landowner heavily indebted to Aaron of Lincoln, the richest moneylender in England, led an attack on York Castle where Aaron, along with 150 other Jews, were massacred. The Magna Carta contains several Jewish clauses which were intended to limit the harm done to English noblemen by interest bearing loans.[98] Joseph Oppenheimer, a financial advisor and lender to the Duke of Württemberg, was executed on the charge of having amassed too much political power, among other accusations.

Despite this opposition, interest-bearing loans and Jewish financiers gradually gained more influence in Europe. In early medieval Europe, many Christian rulers contracted the services of Jewish financiers to circumvent prohibitions on interest. William I of England borrowed heavily from Jews in the aftermath of the Norman invasion of England. Jews also played an important role in financing the Spanish conquest of Muslim Spain— El Cid borrowed from Jews as did Alfonso XI. Other wars that relied on Jewish financing include the war between Henry II of England and Philip II of France, the Anglo-Norman invasion of Ireland, the Hundred Years' War, and several of the Holy Roman Empire's wars against the Ottoman Empire.

Jews also helped develop early financial instruments used by traders in Italian cities like Venice and Genoa. They further refined these practices at the beginning of the Reformation, when Jewish merchants and bankers migrated from Southern to Northern Europe. This migration was driven partly by anti-Jewish policies in Catholic countries, and partly by the relative flexibility of Northern European Protestant countries in interpreting scripture. Starting in the 11th/17th century H/CE, Amsterdam and London emerged as major financial hubs with sizable communities of Jewish bankers and financiers.

Jewish financiers were major supporters of the Protestant cause— for example, Antonio Carvajal, a wealthy Portuguese merchant of Sephardic Jewish origin, provided vital assistance to Oliver Cromwell during his takeover

---

[98] R. Malcolm Hogg, *Jews, Guardians, and Magna Carta, Clause 11*

of England, both in the form of finance and intelligence.[99] In the aftermath of this assistance, Cromwell opened England to Jewish migration for the first time in over 400 years. Francisco Suasso, another Sephardic Jew, advanced William of Orange two million guilders for his successful campaign to depose England's last Catholic monarch, James II. Suasso's family had been forced to convert to Catholicism in Spain, and only returned to openly practicing Judaism after escaping to Holland.

Jewish immigration to Northern Europe was a major factor in the rise of the Protestant Dutch and British empires and the decline of the Catholic Spanish and Portuguese empires; Jews invested in both the Dutch East Indies Company and the British East India Company,[100] which became major forces in the rise of Holland and Britain. As time went on, some Jewish families became among the wealthiest in Europe, influencing the development of both political and financial institutions. Jews composed a significant number of the founding members of the Bank of England, after which most other central banks were modeled. The Bank of England provided critical financial support which enabled Britain to emerge victorious in a number of wars and expand its overseas empire.

It is difficult to say to what extent this pattern was a deliberate result of Jewish plots (if at all), but the development of the modern financial institutions resulted in a system where non-Jews labored and fought each other while Jewish financiers profited from their sweat and blood. Profiting from wars and industrial exploitation was by no means exclusive to Jews—Christians participated in almost every economic venture that Jews did, and generally in higher numbers. However, the expertise and capital of Jews were key to developing modern governments and industry, as was the spread of interest-based financing. Although Christians profited from central banks and interest-bearing loans, it was Jews that first developed modern banking, and Christians who followed them. In *On the Jewish Question*, Karl Marx commented on the Jewish bid for equal political rights, writing:

---

[99] Albert M. Hyamson, *A History of the Jews in England*

[100] Lazarus Goldman, *The History of the Jews in New Zealand*, Eli Faber, *Jews and the Slave Trade*

> The Jew has emancipated himself in a Jewish manner, not only because he has acquired financial power, but also because, through him and also apart from him, money has become a world power and the practical Jewish spirit has become the practical spirit of the Christian nations. The Jews have emancipated themselves insofar as the Christians have become Jews.

Money lending as a profession was closely connected to Jewish identity in the European popular consciousness, and legalizing interest on loans meant that Christians entered this traditionally Jewish vocation. Still, Jews had a head start of several centuries, and retained disproportionate wealth and influence within the financial system.

In a way, Christians had to adopt interest banking to effectively compete with Jews. If it were not for Jews gaining significant wealth and power through money lending, the prohibition on interest in Christendom might have held for much longer. The social impact of finance (including its effect on women and gender roles) are ultimately an expression of Jewish theological doctrines.

The legalization of interest in Europe happened at roughly the same time feudalism was declining. As servitude to feudal lords and taxes paid in foodstuffs or livestock became less common, taxation in central bank currencies and interest-bearing debt became the norm. Peasants no longer toiled for their lords, but instead toiled to pay the debts of the state— with interest. Changing the role of women and family would be an important part of building up this system, since domestic industry overseen by women represented a huge amount of economic activity beyond the reach of central banks.

The Rise of Central Banks and Monetization

The power to create credit is a major factor not only in the ability to organize productive ventures, but also in political activity and war. Adam Smith described the Bank of England as “not an ordinary bank, but a great engine of

state." To put it as simply as possible, the Bank of England was a powerful innovation because it allowed the government to borrow against future tax revenues. Private investors loaned the state money, which the state then used to more effectively wage war and collect taxes. The state then repaid investors with interest from the spoils of war and tax revenues.

Since the establishment of the Bank of England and the beginning of the age of central banks, tax revenue has continuously expanded in all nations that adopted central banks. Charles I of England (d. 1058 H/1649 CE) collected tax revenue roughly consistent with his predecessors in terms of purchasing power. After the reign of George II (d. 1139 H/1760 CE), the purchasing power of state tax revenue had increased 11-fold. By the Napoleonic Wars, less than 50 years later, taxation had increased 36-fold since the reign of Charles I.[101]

It was with this revenue collection, powered by interest-bearing investments, that the British established naval dominance and overseas colonies in India, Australia, Africa, East Asia and the Americas. Commerce with colonies expanded the reach of the British economy, translating to more domestic taxable income, and therefore more profit for bankers and investors. As the wealth of these investors accumulated, so too did their purchases of government debt, and with it the government's ability and need to extract more tax revenue.

This new mode of finance greatly shifted power dynamics. Prior to central banking, it was much more difficult to raise taxes for wars because new taxes often resulted in rebellions. The new credit instruments provided by the central bank, including national currencies, allowed rulers to finance wars with money borrowed against future tax revenues. In this way, rather than trying to collect taxes abruptly and enraging their subjects, they could incrementally raise taxes over time, minimizing social unrest and gradually augmenting the bureaucratic and coercive power of the state.

There were two significant consequences of this development. First is that everything within the ruler's dominion became collateral against debt. British parliamentarian William Cobbett commented:

---

[101] Patrick K. O' Brien, Philip A. Hunt, The Rise of a Fiscal State in England, 1485–1815

> *I set to read the Act of Parliament by which the Bank of England was created. The investors knew what they were about. Their design was to mortgage by degrees the whole country...lands...houses...property...labour. The scheme has produced what the world never saw before - starvation in the midst of abundance.*[102]

This "mortgaging" represented a promise to extract interest from the general population. It meant, in effect, that the government was taking out loans using the entire country, including its people, as collateral. Loans would be repaid by means of putting the people, including the women, to work in ways that yielded ever more taxes.

Perhaps the most powerful part of this system was the fact that taxes had to be paid in bank notes. The value of bank notes was determined by supply and demand, so the more people who wanted to obtain bank notes, the more valuable they would become. The more taxes increased, the more people needed to obtain them to pay their taxes. The more valuable the bank notes became, the more power the state had to implement new taxes, and the more powerful the bankers who issued them became.

Both bankers and the state thus had a direct interest in pushing as many women as possible into formal, waged, taxed labor. The more women who worked for bank notes, paid taxes with bank notes, and made their purchases with bank notes, the more valuable the bank notes (and the banks and governments that issued them) would become. There is a clear interest here to encourage women to leave non-monetized domestic labor and enter the formal economy.

As was the case with industrialists, many prominent bankers financially supported the women's movement and ultimately greatly profited from feminist reforms. A number of prominent members of major banking families such as the Rothschilds, the Morgans, the Mellons, the Rockefellers, the Schiffs, the Warburgs, the Barings, the Sassoons, and the Pritzkers supported women's rights, and women's vocational and higher education in particular. The entry of women into the formal labor force in turn became a powerful driver of demand for both credit and bank notes.

---

[102] W. Cobbett, *The Political Register*, Vol. XVIII, No. 1, London, 14 July, 1810

Industrialization took place only after the development of the Bank of England and the subsequent era of central banks, and many of the early phases of industrialization were defined by the monetization of traditionally non-monetized domains of female labor. Women spinning yarn and weaving cloth for their own families and households without monetary compensation were replaced by factories produced in factories producing goods that had to be purchased with bank notes.

Most of the process of enclosure also occurred during the rise of central banks, replacing small-scale farmers producing food mainly for themselves and their communities with large-scale farms that sold produce exclusively for government-issued money. Salaried nurses eventually replaced home care for the sick and elderly. Even children, rather than participating in the home economy, began to engage in wage labor in factories and mines, receiving salaries paid in bank notes. Eventually, childcare too was outsourced to nurseries and teachers in exchange for bank notes rather than non-monetized care by mothers and grandparents.

Central banks, in partnership with heavy industry and the state, thus gradually monetized all kinds of human activity as a means of increasing the power of both the financial sector and the state. The central bank has the power to create money and lend it at interest to the state; the state can use this money to purchase goods and services from the people, both to wage war and to expand the scope of the state's activities. Both war-making and governance, however, must be conducted in a way that increases revenue in order to pay interest on debt and provide investors with profit.

This gives the state a powerful growth impulse. By leveraging debt, the state is able to grow faster, but high levels of debt mean it also needs to grow continuously. Under this economic model, there is so much debt that the state eventually has to take on new loans in order to pay off old debt. A sustained economic downturn can make it difficult or impossible to repay debts, which can lead to a series of cascading defaults.

This means that the debt-based central banking system generates an insatiable need to expand the economy in any way possible. This growth impulse can be satisfied by international expansion such as colonialism, or by penetration into every aspect of human existence— including family and gender relations. The logical endpoint of this system is human integration into

technology to the extent that all human thoughts, emotions, and relationships can be monitored, measured, monetized, and taxed.

Women working outside of state control, exchanging goods and services with family and community via informal relationships, threatens the entire central banking system with collapse. The modern governmental, industrial, and financial systems have every reason to characterize such lifestyles as backward and oppressive, which is precisely what a great deal of modern feminist discourse does.

Finance, State, and Industry

Finance, state, and industry formed a kind of self-reinforcing feedback loop. Finance was key to building state and industry, and state and industry supported the growth of finance. State and industry were the biggest source of profits for bankers since they were the most consistent borrowers. Both private companies and governments needed a continuous stream of financing to gain the upper hand over their competitors.

Bankers seek to maximize profits by loaning as much money as possible to those they expect will repay the loans while going deeper into debt. This relationship between finance, government, and industry leads to very high economic growth rates and high rates of violence. When private enterprises gain access to large amounts of capital, they can invest to generate more profits. States dependent on debt function much the same way, but in order to repay the loans, states typically need to engage in either internal or external violence.

Bankers thus had an incentive to support the most effective states at extracting wealth, both from their own citizens, and from other countries, and wealth extraction often required violence. They also had an incentive to finance the weapons industry, which would borrow money to develop weapons and pay it back with interest.

Eventually, governments would impose participation in the financial industry on their citizens. Insurance grew up as a branch of the money lending industry. Insurance premiums are a small part of the actual profit of insurance companies— most of their profit comes from collecting interest on cash

reserves stored in banks, which in turn supports the balance sheets of banks. By imposing insurance requirements on citizens and corporations, governments push more money into the financial sector. Another example of state support for the financial sector is pension funds. Many government regulations make pension funds obligatory, and funds for government employees are among the biggest in the world. Typically financial firms manage and profit from these funds.

This is a direct form of government-finance collusion, but there are many other indirect methods. For example, health regulations that place costly testing requirements on medications. This pushes up manufacturing costs for pharmaceutical companies, raising barriers to entry to the medical industry. The result of these regulations is that only large firms that have access to large amounts of capital can enter the market.

Sanitization requirements in the food and beverage industry, like laws on pasteurization, also force producers to either leave the market or take out loans to cover the cost of additional equipment. Onerous building codes push up the cost of housing, forcing more people to take out loans to purchase homes. Even the method of building cities can support the financial sector. Urban planning regulations that increase reliance on cars force more people to take out loans to purchase cars, also boosting financial sector profits.

All of these regulations and requirements make life very difficult for those who do not have money— and it is not possible to escape the consequences except with money created by banks, and governments grant banks a monopoly on the power to create national currencies. The government drives ever higher levels of debt, forcing people to struggle and work more in a cycle of indebtedness. Even those individuals who somehow manage to avoid heavy debts are forced to pay off government debts by way of taxes.

All of this pressure to earn national currencies forces people to reduce the amount of time they spend engaging with informal family and community based credit networks. This naturally decreases the value of the family, which also weakens the position of women as the heart of the family.

Bankers helped industrialists to develop and purchase new machinery, destroying home industries in the process and pushing women into wage labor. Instead of providing food, care, medicine, textiles or clothing

for their family members in informal credit networks, women shifted toward work for bank-issued money in fields like factory labor, domestic service, medical care, teaching, or prostitution. They then used their bank notes to purchase goods made in factories or cultivated on large-scale farms, further increasing demand for bank notes and profits for corporations running on debt.

Legislation fostered all of these changes, not only by granting monopolies to banks and supporting heavy industry, but also by mitigating the damages caused by all of these social changes. Financialization and industrialization caused severe inequality and a great deal of human suffering and conflict, including increased rates of domestic violence. It often fell to the state to clean up this mess and prevent popular unrest which could threaten the smooth functioning of finance and industry. Social stabilization took the form of new methods of policing and social welfare— also financed using interest-based debt.

Individualism and the Illusion of Liberation

All of the new legislation which supported the rise of finance depended on the demise of Christianity as a source of legislation. With human intellect and empirical data enshrined as the ultimate source of truth, it was possible to reform the legal system in line with the interests of bankers. The most prominent example of this was dismantling the centuries-old prohibition on interest banking, but abolishing laws on sexual morality would also play an important role.

Although the later phases of building the modern world system depended on abandoning many aspects of Christian morality, on a deeper level the Church had actually laid the foundation for the rise of bankers. The West was fertile ground for the development of an economic system based on high levels of debt due to unusually high levels of individualism and small families resulting from centuries of Church reforms. Whereas other parts of the world relied on kinship ties for organizing joint ventures or covering expenses related to accidents, relatively atomized European society was well-prepared to turn to finance as a substitute for kinship-based financial networks.

Individual independence was naturally supportive of the new model of economic growth and progress. Independent people shared less, which resulted in higher levels of consumer demand. The Christian ideal represented God as a human being, and then insisted that everyone ought to strive to imitate this ideal. God, a supreme being, is all powerful and not dependent on created beings for anything. Under the schema of imitating a human incarnation of God, the more independent individuals become from each other, the closer they are to the ideal of emulating the human incarnation of God.

Fulfilling needs through money rather than non-monetized relationships generated an illusion of independence, since being dependent on very large and abstract institutions like the state allowed individuals a much wider range of choice as to what they wanted to do with their lives. The financial sector eventually supported this sensation of freedom by means of consumer debt, so that individuals could further detach from family and community by making purchases that would ordinarily be beyond their means. This accelerated the decline of domestic labor by enabling large purchases like washing machines, enabling women to spend more time in the formal labor force.

The idea that this actually represents independence and freedom is deceptive, however, because freedom from control by religious institutions and family is only replaced by control by governments and corporations. In fact, this debt-driven liberation introduced a kind "debt slavery" around the same time traditional slavery was in decline.

This independence is actually very hollow, though, since the ever increasing control of the state takes the place of social restrictions imposed by family and religion. Furthermore, this way of life is characterized by such high levels of debt that it introduced a kind of "debt slavery" after traditional forms of slavery were abolished.

The continued breakdown of families and home industry pushed women into the public sphere, while the feminist ideal of strong and independent women pulled them into dependence on either heavily indebted governments or corporations, and eventually consumer credit. Naturally, more independent women decreased overall household size (due to both increased divorce rates and decreased fertility rates), which in turn increased

consumer spending and reliance on consumer credit. In other words, although the drive for women's independence had roots in liberation theology, it ultimately caused women and the society at large to sink deeper into debt slavery.

The Cantillon Effect and Money as a Tool for Social Control

Central bank currencies contain a powerful tool for promoting the interests of finance— inflation. In modern economies, people learn to accept constant inflation as a fact of life, but it actually acts as a subtle tool for draining value from national economies.

When new money is created, either by physically printing banknotes or issuing new loans, it dilutes the overall value of the national currency. In other words, it transfers value from the old money to the new money. Imagine you have a cup of juice, and someone sits next to you with a cup of water and asks you to mix your cup of juice with his cup of water. After mixing, you both have a full cup to drink, but the actual effect is that your juice becomes less sweet, and the person who sat next to you has sweetened his water.

To give a crude example of what this looks like in an economy, if an economy consists of only 10,000 paper dollars and 100 sheep of equal value, each sheep will cost 100 dollars. If 2,000 new dollars are introduced without any new sheep entering the economy, the cost of a sheep will eventually go up to 120 dollars.

However, this price adjustment is not instantaneous. It takes time for the market to adjust to the new money, which means whoever gets their hands on the new money first has an advantage over everyone else, since they are able to buy goods at lower prices before the effects of inflation kick in. In the fictional village with 100 identical sheep and 10,000 dollars, the first villager to receive the 2,000 new dollars can go out and buy 20 sheep for 2,000 dollars. As the new dollars enter circulation, their value goes down and the price of sheep in dollar terms goes up, since the supply of dollars has increased while the supply of sheep stays the same.

When the second villager goes to purchase a sheep the price might go up to 105 dollars, and then go up to 110 for the third, until finally settling at 120. The end result is that the first villager to get the new money now has 20 sheep worth 2,400 dollars, although he only paid 2,000 for them. The other villagers have devalued dollars with less buying power, such that they cannot recover the same number of sheep for the money they sold them for. This dynamic is sometimes called the Cantillon effect, named after Richard Cantillon, one of the first economists to formally describe it.

In early modern economies, most debt was created to finance government expenditures (usually wars), so the government was the first beneficiary of newly created money. As time went on, debt issuance expanded to include corporations and eventually mass consumer debt. Every time new money is created, it transfers real wealth from those further away from money creation to those closer to the money creation. In the case of early wars in England, it meant reducing the purchasing power of rural power and increasing the power of the government. When it came to financing large corporations, it transferred wealth from workers to industrialists. Mass consumer credit was a kind of democratization of money creation, but it still transfers real wealth from those without access to credit to those who can borrow.

This system effectively rewards whoever can take out the most debt while still remaining solvent. In such an economy, access to credit acts as a powerful method of social control. Sovereign bond rating agencies greatly impact the decisions of national governments, because if they downgrade a country, it becomes more expensive for that country to borrow. "Development" loans for formerly colonized countries usually come with conditions for specific legal and fiscal reforms. When loaning to corporations, loan underwriters look for certain performance metrics and corporate governance practices. Consumer credit bureau's track the behavior of individuals and assign them credit scores accordingly.

This means the entire economic system is based upon theft, with those who comply most with the will of the bankers able to steal the most. This has serious implications for gender, because when this system was first introduced, women were not even allowed to take out loans except with the permission of their male guardians. Men earned wages from corporations or

businesses that access newly created money, meaning that they were on the winning side of the Cantillon effect while women were on the losing side.

This put great pressure on women to shift to monetized work as a means of escaping from the pernicious effects of inflation. As inflationary currency became more widespread, pressure mounted on women to enter the wage labor in debt-dependent industries and governments to avoid losing real wealth. The tangible expression of this pressure was not necessarily money losing its buying power, but rather steady increases in cost of living. In addition to pushing women to pursue work in the formal sector and forcing them to rely more on central bank currencies, this also eventually pushed them to use consumer credit, further strengthening the financial sector.

Exporting Finance and Feminism

The Cantillon effect exists not only in economies dominated by a single national currency, but also internationally. Inflationary effects of money creation can pressure entire nations to comply with the will of the financial system, the same way it pressured women to enter the formal labor market. On the national level, inflation pushes the population to behave in ways that increase their access to credit. On the international level, countries with high inflation need to obtain low inflation currencies to stabilize their economies.

To obtain low inflation currencies, residents of high-inflation countries must pursue activities demanded by the issuers of the low-inflation currencies or debt denominated in low inflation currencies. This eventually means restructuring the economy toward subservience to the low-inflation countries.

Countries with low-inflation currencies demand cheap commodities, including agricultural products like cacao, coffee, tea, sugar, wheat, rice, palm oil, as well as mineral wealth. Large corporations are typically more able to provide these commodities at low prices due to better access to financing and greater economy of scale. As corporations take over production in high-inflation countries, it replicates the process of industrialization in Europe by pushing families (including women) off the land and into wage labor. This

leads to many of the same problems that led to the rise of feminism in Europe, consequently generating demand for feminism in colonized countries.

Strong demand for a currency helps to maintain low inflation, so one way neo-colonial powers can maintain low inflation rates is through strong exports. Just as the breakup of traditional home industries in Europe generated demand for industrial goods, breaking up traditional modes of production in colonies helped to generate demand for imports from colonial power centers. This also increases demand for national currencies by pushing people away from non-monetized economic activities toward monetized production and exchange. Exports from neo-colonial powers include household appliances, industrial equipment, education, entertainment, fashion, weapons systems, consulting services, and so forth.

One of the most important neo-colonial exports is education. Education exports are a major stabilizing factor for currencies, since foreign students have to purchase the local currency to pay tuition fees and living expenses while studying. Education is also subject to laws of supply and demand, so generating demand from colonies helps to boost the market for education in neo-colonial power centers, as well as providing a vehicle for projecting Western ideology. Feminism plays a vital role in promoting education, since it was central to "women's empowerment" and career development.

Infrastructure plays an important role in all this— infrastructure is often financed with debt, and these loans come with conditions about restructuring the economies of colonized countries in line with neo-colonial interests. These conditions often include opening markets to subsidized exports from neo-colonial powers, driving local producers out of business and into waged labor for large corporations. Infrastructure increases demand for goods like consumer electronics, and also replaces many forms of domestic labor, facilitating entry of women into waged labor and accelerating the monetization of the economy.

These transformations initially have disproportionate negative effects on women, forcing them to seek both better wages and more access to finance. This in turn pushes them toward feminist rhetoric, which is prominent in Western educational initiatives, and further accelerates the disintegration of the family.

The capital necessary for implementing these reforms originally came from forcing women into the formal labor force in the West and increasing the power of state, industry, and finance in the process. The continued development of neo-colonial powers depends on pushing still more women in colonized countries to serve the same corporate and monetary networks, and feminism helps to mitigate the harms of this process and to make it more appealing to women.

This process, in effect, is the masculinization of the entire world as part of the quest to actualize Christian theology. If the human (and by extension humanity) is meant to emulate a human, male god, then typically masculine attributes such as rational thought, dominance, assertiveness, and participation in the public sphere and formal labor market must subvert typically feminine characteristics such as empathy, intuition, submissiveness, modesty and labor in the home. Western civilization must either try to force reality to conform to its theology, or accept that its theology is fundamentally flawed.

At first, it might seem easy for "post-Christian" Western civilization to reject Christian theology. This theology and its implications, however, go much deeper than a few verbal affirmations about the nature of God. The emphasis on fundamental human rights, national sovereignty, rationalism, liberty, empiricism, and most importantly, progress, all stem from the legacy of Western Christianity. The West's geopolitical hegemony depends on the dominance of this ideology, as does the continued growth and survival of the most crucial institutions upon which Western civilization is built— industry, the state, and finance.

Pushing all of humanity into activities that can be quantified (including by way of monetization) and optimized for maximum efficiency is part of universalizing masculine principles. To accept and embrace traditional feminine gender roles is a threat to this process, and therefore a threat to Western hegemony. To embrace traditional gender roles means to give up on the mission of apotheosis, or attaining divinity, by means of economic growth, technology, and incorporating all of humanity into the archetype of a human, male god.

This is a process of amalgamating and concentrating all human power to strive toward realization of the divine in the human. The miracles of

technology depend on the power of finance, so the financialization of the whole of humanity is the key to achieving divine power and ultimately immortality. Finance is the command and control system, the nervous system of modernity. It is finance that guides humanity on the quest to realize the divine within the human.

The relentless expansion of finance goes beyond seeking to quantify and monetize the existence of every people and nation. In the quest toward the actualization of divinity in humans, it needs even more energy than the earth can provide, and so must extend into space. The wealthiest people in the world thus invest their amassed wealth into penetrating the heavens (the abode of God), with the intent of conquering them and extracting their power and resources.

Attempts at mastery of the universe do not come cheap. The process of seeking to attain divine power from the heavens requires harnessing ever more of the earth's human and natural resources. This requires more than just extending systems of control, surveillance, and resource extraction to colonies. It also requires penetrating ever deeper into the human soul.

Chapter 9

Consumerism

The theology of progress depends on continuous growth in multiple ways — morally, materially, economically, and financially. Morally, if economic growth and technological progress stops, governments who claim legitimacy by advancing material progress become illegitimate. If a society built upon the theology of progress cannot deliver progress, believers in the ideology lose their sense of purpose and motivation.

Materially, this ideology requires directing ever more material and human resources toward increased efficiency, productivity, and technological complexity, because increasing living standards and developing new technologies requires ever more resources. Economically, efficiency increases with the scale of production and consumption, so it is necessary to continuously expand the scope of all forms of production.

Financially, the system runs on interest-bearing debt, and so if profits decline for a sustained period, debtors will be unable to pay creditors, and these creditors in turn will be unable to pay their debts. This can lead to a chain reaction of defaults, which results either in bank deposits disappearing or currency devaluation as banks create more money to avoid defaults.

This system has similarities to a Ponzi scheme, a type of investment fraud where early investors receive profits from the investments of later investors. As the scheme grows, the disparity between real wealth paid into the scheme and promises to deliver wealth in the future widens, until eventually those managing the scheme are unable to fulfill their promises. At this point, those managing the scheme usually take the money and run.

The longer a Ponzi scam goes on, the more money the scammers are able to collect. This means the best scammers will seek a careful balance — they have to provide high enough returns to attract more investments, but the returns cannot be so high to outpace the growth of the scheme. The scheme can grow in two ways; by bringing in new investors, or by convincing participants to invest even more.

The modern system can capture more wealth to feed its dependence on interest in two ways; by bringing in more participants, or by convincing existing participants to put more wealth into the system. A root system is a good metaphor for this process; as a tree grows, there are two types of growth. One is to expand the roots outward, and the other is to increase the density of the root system within areas where roots are already present.

Colonialism, which in many ways mirrors the process of industrialization in the West, brings more participants into the system. By displacing subsistence farmers from the land and putting them to work on large plantations in exchange for paper money or bank deposits, new labor power enters the network. New lands provide minerals and agricultural resources, enabling more specialization in technological manufacturing and research and development in other areas.

Consumerism increases the density of the network by finding ways to convince individuals to consume and work more, and to monetize more and more aspects of their lives. In a way, consumerism mirrors the process of colonialism, but within individuals. It is the process of linking every desire to some monetized good or service, and amplifying every desire. The more things a person desires, and the more strongly they desire them, the harder they will be willing to work to obtain them, so harnessing desire is key to economic development.

Gender and sexuality play a central role in this process, because love and sex are among the strongest forms of human desire. Feminism would come to play an essential role in unlocking this economic potential and bringing it into the monetized economy.

Maximizing the Utility of Gender

Modern economic thought revolves around "utility maximization." In modern societies, this is the main guiding principle of society. Looking at history, it might seem at first that economic growth replaced worship as the main goal of society, but economic growth is, in fact, a religious principle. It is the belief that maximizing human prosperity (and happiness) is the will of God.

While economic thought initially focused on maximizing production, it was also well suited to maximization of human pleasure. Classical economics textbooks are rife with examples that revolve around pleasure and enjoyment.

The "law of declining returns" is sometimes explained using ice cream; you derive a great deal of pleasure from the first ice cream cone, but each subsequent ice cream is less enjoyable, until the seventh or eighth makes you ill. The principle of "sunk cost" is taught using the cinema; if you pay for a movie ticket, but realize 20 minutes in that the movie is terrible, the price of the ticket is a "sunk cost." It makes no sense to stay and watch a bad movie for another hour when you can derive more utility (ie. enjoyment) from doing something else with that time.

Although the idea of maximizing human prosperity and happiness is an essential virtue originated from religious thought, secularism detached it from any explicit divine or spiritual connections. Many in the West feared that basing governing principles on explicitly transcendent theology could lead to more of the bloody religious conflict that had plagued Europe for centuries. The secularized worldview focused on goals and metrics that everyone could agree on (or so they hoped), regardless of their religious background; profit and loss, pleasure and pain.

The dichotomies of profit-loss and pleasure-pain were strongly linked; the most effective way to obtain profits was to sell products or services that either provided pleasure or prevented pain. Likewise, selling something which people found unenjoyable or which caused them pain is a sure way to lose money. Maximizing economic utility, the principle at the heart of modern economic thought, was inseparable from the project of maximizing pleasure and enjoyment.

The mass entry of women into the public sphere and labor market served this logic. If attraction between men and women could be monetized, it would enhance the power of finance by generating ever more demand for fiat national currencies. It could also support industry by using sexual desire to sell more products and gain customer loyalty. The state also stood to benefit, as it could collect sales and income tax on monetized sexual interactions. Instead of men admiring and enjoying the beauty of their wives (with no real benefit to finance, industry, or government), they would admire and enjoy the beauty of saleswomen, cashiers, waitresses, flight attendants,

actresses, models, dancers, secretaries, nurses, and other professional women whose beauty was accessible only via national, debt-based currencies.

Competition is core to modern economic logic, and this logic extended to the market for female beauty. The more women entered into direct competition with each other for the attention of men, the more sophisticated the means of drawing that attention would become. Aside from all of the first degree benefits to industry, state, and finance, this would also support the growth of a number of ancillary industries, including fashion, perfumes, cosmetics, and luxury accessories for women. For men, the shift from a lifelong bond to a single woman to a lifestyle of constant exposure to hundreds of women increases demand for status symbols as men compete for women. As courtship becomes increasingly marketized, men depend more on expensive status symbols such as expensive cars, watches, and houses to attract women.

Increasing the amount of attraction between men and women could thus stimulate the kind of competition that liberali economic theory held as essential for economic growth, and therefore the grand vision of the theology of progress.

Desire as a Driver of Consumption and Production

As industrial production expanded, industrial producers faced a crisis of overproduction. Edward Bernays, a psychoanalyst active in the development of consumerism and the nephew of Sigmund Freud, commented:

> Mass production is profitable only if its rhythm can be maintained — that is if it can continue to sell its product in steady or increasing quantity.... Today supply must actively seek to create its corresponding demand ... [and] cannot afford to wait until the public asks for its product; it must maintain constant touch, through advertising and propaganda ... to assure itself the continuous demand which alone will make its costly plant profitable.[103]

[103] Edward Bernays, *Propaganda*

Bernays' career exemplifies the close connection between the development of consumerism and discourse surrounding women's liberation. One of Bernays' most famous marketing campaigns was for the tobacco industry, where he branded cigarettes as "freedom torches" in ads targeting women. At the time, women smoking cigarettes was taboo, and considered a mark of a "fallen woman." Bernays sought to make cigarettes a symbol of women's liberation, and was quite successful in his quest to challenge traditional gender expectations and normalize women smoking.

Narratives about freedom and independence for women supported increased consumption by women in a number of ways, not only by encouraging them to adopt traditionally male habits, but also to have control over their own property, such as household goods and automobiles. However, the most important role women would play in the development of consumerism was not as consumers, but as drivers of consumption. The expansion of television and film greatly expanded the opportunities for using feminine beauty in advertising and entertainment. With the expansion of mass media, opportunities to earn profits by leveraging sexual attraction exploded.

Bernays tapped into the emerging field of psychoanalysis to shape the new consumer culture. According to Bernays:

> Many of man's thoughts and actions are compensatory substitutes for desires which [he] has been obliged to suppress. A thing may be desired, not for its intrinsic worth or usefulness, but because he has unconsciously come to see in it a symbol of something else, the desire for which he is ashamed to admit to himself.

By subconsciously linking sexual imagery to consumer products, the desire for those products could be manipulated and amplified. Sexual desire is one of the strongest motivating factors in human psychology, and as such represents an ideal force for fuelling mass consumption. Economist John Galbraith wrote on the importance of stimulating desire for products:

> Goods are plentiful. Demand for them must be elaborately contrived. Those who create wants rank amongst our most talented and highly

paid citizens. Want creation — advertising — is a 10 billion dollar industry.

Increased consumption driven by sexual attraction supports production efficiency by means of economy of scale. As people consume more, the scale of production increases, lowering costs and increasing production efficiency all along the industrial supply chain. As the price of basic goods went down, gains in production efficiency were distributed to other sectors of the economy, multiplying further consumption.

Injecting feminine beauty into the marketplace on a massive scale leveraged the power of novelty. Levels of attraction and sexual stimulation tend to decrease with familiarity, so exposure to a new object of sexual attraction leads to a short-term boost in overall sexual stimulation and desire. This effect is present in both men and women, but tends to be stronger in men.[104] This means that when men and women have more exposure to many different men and women rather than a single husband or wife, they will experience stronger feelings of desire and attraction. If this desire is connected to consumption, it translates to more profits.

This dynamic is easy to observe in entertainment, including pornography, where there is a constant demand for new actresses. The average career length of female actresses tends to be shorter than that of male actors, as viewers tend to value women for their youth and beauty. When a society sets maximal consumption as its goal, feminine beauty ceases to be a means of pair bonding, and instead becomes an end in itself; a natural resource to be extracted, processed, distributed and consumed.

While consumerism extracts feminine beauty as a kind of natural resource, in the context of advertisement, it is also a tool for extracting consumptive energy. One of the main functions of feminine beauty is bonding. In the context of the family, attraction helps form a mutually beneficial bond between husband and wife. In traditional gender roles, this bond solidifies a partnership to undertake productive activities, including raising children, maintaining a household, and producing goods and services which benefit the

[104] See *Role of Partner Novelty in Sexual Functioning: A Review*

broader community. With the mass marketization of feminine beauty, attraction helps to form bonds between consumers and brands or products.

Likewise, the desire to *be desired* acts as a powerful motivator for consumption by women. When men become overstimulated by female beauty, they need increasing levels of novelty to achieve the same levels of stimulation. As the number of women men are exposed to increases, their standards of beauty also become higher and higher. They are no longer viewing a random sampling of women in their immediate community and judging beauty by those standards, but viewing an idealized collection of the most attractive women the market can find, mass distributed through media and advertisements.

Instead of interacting with a small circle of female relatives, men interact with a wide range of female employees throughout their daily life. In many cases, when female employees get too old, they are replaced with younger, more attractive employees to maintain the customer base's interest. In other words, women are treated as disposable, fitting with the general trend of increasing consumption (and therefore efficiency) by means of disposable goods.

The more pleasure a person experiences, the higher their tolerance for pleasure becomes, and the more stimulation they require to achieve the same level of gratification. As sexual desire becomes more strongly linked to consumption, more consumption is required to achieve the same level of gratification. This leads to a compounding cycle which drives continuous economic growth.

This arrangement has a number of negative side effects for women. Among the side effects are increasing insecurity about physical appearance, difficulty finding stable and supportive relationships, sexual harassment and violence, and feelings of objectification. A number of mental illnesses among women, most notably anorexia and bulimia, but also depression and anxiety are strongly associated with consumerist culture.

Feminism played an important role in convincing women to go along with the cultural and social changes brought by consumerism. While using women's beauty to sell products (or selling it as a product in itself) can easily be seen as exploitation, heavy focus on the need for independence from men helped to cast it as empowerment and liberation. Theologically, this is

consistent with the classical economic view that humans seeking their own self-interest (as with Smith's invisible hand) is an expression of a divine inner impulse that promotes the well-being of society.

In this worldview, liberation is understood primarily in terms of the market; the interests of the market are assumed to be in perfect harmony with the interests of humanity, because the stronger the market becomes, the more prosperous humanity becomes. From this perspective, it is difficult to imagine that treating women as disposable sex objects could be bad for women, because it's clearly good for the market.

From a narrow enough economic perspective, there is some truth to this; women do share in the fruits of their commodification. Even if they experience some unpleasant side effects in the process such as sexual harassment, being abandoned multiple times by men they love, and facing depression as they get older and society loses interest in them, they gain access to more consumer goods, lower prices, and economic independence. In a materialist, empirical paradigm, measurable, material gains trump hard to measure emotional and psychological losses.

Ultimately, whatever psychological harms come with the commodification of women can be justified by the theology of progress. After all, what is some psychological distress and sexual abuse compared to the promised end of war, hunger, disease, the advent of an earthly paradise and ascension to the status of divinity? Also recall that the internal logic of the system was shaped by men; if women dislike having multiple sexual partners who are unwilling to commit, it is simply a sign that they need to adopt a more masculine attitude toward sexuality. If women adjust themselves so that sex becomes more about sensual enjoyment and less about emotional connection, they will be "improving" themselves and doing a service for the economy and the vision of universal progress.

Applying Industrial Logic to Sexuality and Consumption

Industrial logic came to dominate many fields beyond manufacturing; public education acts as a kind of assembly line for raising children, and hospitals

apply a similar approach to caring for the sick and elderly. Consumerism applied the logic of mass production to the experience of feminine beauty. Just as one woman teaching tens or hundreds of children was more efficient than one woman teaching only her own children, from a narrow economic perspective, 50, 100 or 100,000 men enjoying the beauty of a woman (and paying for it) is more efficient and productive than only one man enjoying that beauty. In commercial establishments, men enter and exit, experiencing and enjoying the beauty of a particular woman in a manner not unlike an assembly line. A man may see a beautiful woman when he picks up a coffee before work, before flirting with the receptionist at his office. Another beautiful woman serves him his work lunch at a restaurant. After work, he sees still more beautiful women working out at the gym, before going home to unwind by watching a TV show filled with more beautiful women. Throughout his day, experiences of desire and attraction are imprinted upon him, shaping his experience in a manner similar to raw materials in factories undergoing a step-by-step transformation into finished products.

Upon superficial analysis, this appears to be more productive. The utility derived from a woman's beauty when that beauty is enjoyed mainly by her husband is much lower than the utility derived from tens or hundreds (or in some cases millions) of men enjoying that beauty. Many women also enjoy the sensation of being admired by men, so it is possible to argue that there is more utility for women with this industrial approach to sexuality.

As with material production, there is a qualitative loss that comes with the quantitative gains of an industrial approach to sexuality. A pair of socks knitted by a family member have a certain feeling and significance that socks produced in a factory can never have. Likewise, the experience of beauty and attraction in a stable relationship provides a level of emotional fulfillment that superficial sexualized interactions with waitresses, secretaries, and female flight attendants cannot. However, this lack of emotional fulfillment also feeds the logic of mass consumption. A deep and fulfilling marital relationship can give both a husband and wife a strong sense of internal contentment which could actually reduce their need to seek continuous stimulation through consumer goods or monetized sexualized interactions. High levels of loneliness and feelings of emptiness, by contrast, can be very

good for economic growth as people seek to fill their internal void by spending.

There are parallels to this dynamic in many sectors of the economy. Industrialized agriculture trades quantitative gains for qualitative losses. Modern agricultural methods produce much higher yields than traditional methods, but produce has lower levels of vitamins and minerals.[105] Industrial produce also contains traces of herbicides, fungicides, insecticides, and synthetic fertilizers which have subtle but cumulative adverse health effects. Large-scale agricultural techniques also tend to exhaust the soil, leading to an ever increasing need for non-renewable, synthetic mineral-based fertilizers. Soil exhaustion decreases the overall immunity of plants, further increasing reliance on herbicides, fungicides, and insecticides. This also serves the interests of industry, government and finance, since natural plant immunity based on a healthy soil biome is not controlled by centralized industry and is difficult to tax and monetize.

Similarly, the experience of mass attraction in monetized contexts may yield more net gratification than a traditional marriage, but it comes with a number of negative side effects. Women whose beauty is used in processes of mass consumption sometimes feel objectified or experience harassment. Feelings of attraction with many men or women can disrupt the formation of more stable relationships. Women used in this manner may also face considerable difficulty adapting later in life when their beauty begins to fade. When men become used to interacting with and enjoying so many women, they are inclined to wait for "something better," and become averse to commitment. This unwillingness to commit on the part of men is an almost universal cause of angst among women in highly consumerist societies.

The industrialization of attraction is an expression of the masculine logic of consumerism; it is, in fact, a system built by men, for men. Feminist authors, especially those with Marxist leanings, are well aware of this, but most refuse to acknowledge that the project of granting women equal rights and participation in the public sphere is aggravating this process. Men are inclined to have sex with multiple women if they are able to. On an animalistic

---

[105] Raju Bhardwaj, et al., "An Alarming Decline in the Nutritional Quality of Foods: The Biggest Challenge for Future Generations' Health"

level, men wish to impregnate as many women as possible, and they are able to impregnate multiple women at the same time. Their natural tendency is thus to find gratification in interaction and attraction with multiple women, and to focus on physical attributes which indicate fertility.

Women do not derive nearly as much enjoyment from looking at many attractive men, as they are more inclined to seek stable relationships which can support them through pregnancy and child-rearing. Applying industrial logic to physical beauty, then, represents a subjugation of women's nature to male preferences. This is not to say that women cannot learn to enjoy this dynamic; rather, it means that men are naturally suited to this system while women must adapt to it. This, among other things, puts men at an advantage in consumerist systems.

Just as industrialized agriculture leads to exhaustion of the soil, industrialized attraction leads to emotional and sexual "burnout." Men become over-saturated with the experience of feminine beauty, such that they develop unrealistic standards of beauty and find themselves under-stimulated by all of the women available to them. This negatively affects both their ability to enter new relationships and the quality of their existing relationships. Women are traumatized from being repeatedly sexually used and abandoned, and many become reluctant or unwilling to make themselves vulnerable by forming deep bonds with men. The number of relationships increases while the quality of relationships decreases.

Just as industrialization demanded a labor rights movement, the industrialization of sexuality demanded a women's rights movement as women became increasingly exposed to sexual harassment and exploitation. Just as industrialized agriculture poisoned and depleted the soil, the mass exploitation of beauty and sexuality poisoned and depleted human psychology and relationships.

The Social Isolation Multiplier

The strength of any structure is determined by the strength of the bonds between the structure's constituent parts. Attraction is a process which forms bonds. Just as a man's attraction to his wife strengthens a family, a man's

attraction to an attractive woman representing a brand strengthens his bond to the brand. Attraction between men and women in the workplace strengthens their bonds to the corporation or institution where they work. As individuals develop bonds to institutions other than the family, their bonds to the family weaken.

It is possible to drive economic growth by increasing the number of sexualized interactions in the economy, but this growth comes at the expense of family stability. The more interactions between men and women in the public sphere, the more opportunities for infidelity arise. Studies of divorce show that infidelity is one of the biggest factors driving divorce.[106]

With men and women as atomized individuals and the family rendered obsolete as a productive unit, there is little reason left to keep a relationship together except attraction. Marital bonds are constantly under assault by more attractive potential partners. This applies to physical as well as intellectual and emotional attraction. In the course of professional life and recreation, both men and women constantly encounter potential partners who might seem to be more beautiful, interesting, supportive, mysterious, or compatible with them than their present partner.

Advertisements and entertainment make this process even worse by fabricating completely fictional personas. Fantasies are one of the best ways to stimulate desires, meaning they are one of the most powerful ways to drive sales. A media climate which presents fantastical images of potential romantic partners, combined with a social climate where constant contact with new potential partners is the norm generates a social climate where people will tend to be dissatisfied with what they have and constantly on the lookout for something better.

The more relationships an individual has, the more likely they are to become unwilling to commit to a long-term relationship. For women, this usually relates to trauma and fear of abandonment, while for me it is driven by hedonistic pursuit of pleasure. Much research has confirmed that both men

---

[106] See Shelby Scott, et al., "Reasons for Divorce and Recollections of Premarital Intervention: Implications for Improving Relationship Education" and other similar studies.

and women are more likely to divorce the more sexual partners they have before marriage.[107]

This situation boosts consumption (and therefore economic growth) in many ways. Firstly, it leads to smaller average household size since there are more single people. More households means more housing units constructed, more demand for energy, and more household appliances, furniture and decorations sold. It also means people will eat out more, since cooking and washing dishes makes less economic sense in smaller households. Second, in a society composed of smaller families individuals have less family support which means more demand for monetized services, such as paid care for children and the elderly. Fewer close family relationships also means that people turn to monetized services for social contact, such as chatting with servers in restaurants and cafes, going to hairdressers or manicurists, and other monetized activities.

Mass marketization of sexuality thus boosts consumption from two sides. More sexualized interactions surrounding the purchase and sale of goods and services strengthens markets. At the same time, more exposure to sexualized interactions degrades non-monetized social relationships and increases overall social isolation, further boosting consumption.

This is a win for all sides of the trinity of modernity; finance gets more demand for central bank currencies; industry gets more sales and higher production efficiency; and the state gets more tax revenue and dependence on state services from the population. All of these gains depend on convincing women that striving for financial independence is an essentially virtuous act.

Bloodlust: Sexual Desire and Warfare

High levels of consumption have important military implications. First, military power is important for maintaining industrial power. Ever-increasing demand requires access to cheap raw materials to feed productive processes. Securing and maintaining access to cheap resources requires military

[107] See Smith and Wolfinger, "Re-Examining the Link Between Premarital Sex and Divorce"

interventions, either to secure resources against rival powers or to suppress rebellions by workers unhappy with their working conditions. Military intervention is also important for maintaining access to colonial export markets who might otherwise produce their own goods.

Military power is thus key to securing resources and keeping consumption high. Maximal industrial power requires maximum consumption, since economy of scale pushes costs down and increases efficiency and profit. The more efficient production becomes, the more profitable access to resources becomes. As access to resources becomes more profitable, there is more incentive for military interventions to secure resources.

Just as military power is key to industrial power, industrial power is the basis for modern military power, because industries like steel, aluminum, petrochemical refining, and chemical synthesis feed both military and non-military industries. High consumption across both military and non-military industries increases efficiency and lowers prices in these base industries. This means that consumer consumption makes military production more powerful, and military consumption makes consumer consumption cheaper. This is why the US has both far higher levels of consumption and military power than other countries, and why China has deliberately promoted more consumer spending at the same time it pursues military buildup.

Consumption is driven by desire, so maximizing desire is an important part of military conquest in this model. Conquest in turn opens other avenues for stimulating desire and boosting consumption. Wars come along with an influx of refugees from invaded countries. These refugees open up new restaurants with unique cuisine, bring exotic clothing and artwork, and bring new types of beauty for novel (and often monetized) sexual stimulation. This helps to alleviate the problem of boredom and tedium which affects consumers. Injecting women of diverse ethnicities into the market serves the same purpose as replacing aging actresses with young ones — driving consumption with novelty.

Monetization of sexuality also plays an important role in financing wars. National debt effectively means borrowing against the future productivity of the entire population, so the more money women generate, the more valuable they are as collateral for debt. If women stay in the home

and engage in non-monetized work, it is difficult or impossible to borrow against their sex appeal.

On a more personal level, dynamics of sexual pleasure and power are intimately linked. This is evidenced by the popularity of bondage and sado-masochism (BDSM) in post-industrial economies. These practices typically involve some kind of domination and submission, with one sexual partner tying up or even beating another for sexual pleasure. In extreme cases, serial killers have similar motives; many of the most prolific killers describe deriving sexual pleasure from torturing and murdering their victims.

The rise of sado-masochism as a sexual practice and sexually motivated serial killers has some parallels to the rise of consumerism. During the decades following the Second World War, the United States had far more serial killers per capita than any other country, and it was around this time BDSM started to make its transition to mainstream acceptability. Highly consumerist societies in general have much higher rates of abnormal sexual interests and fetishes. For serial killers, murder is ultimately a fetish, albeit a less socially acceptable one than most.

The rise of fetishes is a natural response to sexual saturation that comes with using sexuality to drive consumption. When people are bombarded with sexualized imagery and interactions every day, and when sex with multiple partners becomes the norm, "normal" sexual interactions no longer provide sufficient stimulation, leading many to turn toward bizarre or shocking sexual behaviors.

Before the First World War, it was not uncommon to hear of men becoming sexually aroused just by seeing a woman's ankle in more conservative areas in the United States. After the Second World War, miniskirts and bikinis became increasingly widespread, as did the use of partially nude women in advertisement and entertainment. Within a few decades, women's ankles and calves became almost entirely desexualized in the United States, such that men becoming aroused from seeing a woman's ankle became unheard of.

As an interesting side note, it was in science fiction that the miniskirt first appeared before gaining wide popularity. The early science fiction series *Space Patrol* depicted a future where women were empowered, treated as equals of men, and wore miniskirts. Within a decade of the show's production,

miniskirts entered the mainstream. Women's liberation was envisioned as an integral part of a high-tech future.

As society became more sexualized and sex became more monetized, divorce rates and extramarital relations increased. Around the same time, the popularity of sexual fetishes, including bondage and sado-masochism, and the number of serial killers increased as well, particularly in the United States. Some neurological and psychological studies have suggested a link between sexual desire and violence in the brain.[108] Among animals, seeing a female can trigger aggressive responses as they prepare to fight with other males for the female. It is not surprising, then, that seeking to maximize consumption through sexual desire can be accompanied with heightened levels of violence.

Feminism emerged from liberalism, and liberalism has actually had connections to sado-masochism going back to the French revolution. The Marquis de Sade, who inspired the term *sadism,* was a major intellectual figure in the development of liberalism, and was also famous as one of the earliest and most prolific sexual perverts. As a wealthy nobleman, he had almost unlimited access to young women, and at some point became bored with normal sexual exploits and turned to a number of fetishes, including torturing women for sexual pleasure.

Despite this lurid history, he is still revered by many later standard bearers of liberalism, including the eminent feminist theorist Simone de Beauvoir. Sade's writings are filled with descriptions of murders, and de Beauvoir comments on this tendency of his, saying that "[murder]...represents the exacerbated demand for unrestrained and fearless freedom."[109]

In a way, de Beauvoir excuses Sade's obsession with murder as part of the project of liberalism. Liberalism was striving to throw off the shackles of tyranny, and Sade sought to do this by thoroughly rejecting every moral law, including the prohibition on murder. Oddly enough, a feminist like de Beauvoir defends Sade despite his proclivity for abusing women, on the grounds of his service to freedom. His abuses were justified to some extent, in her eyes, because he was seeking freedom from the same oppressive moral law that she saw as oppressing women.

---

[108] For example, see *Identification of an aggression-promoting pheromone and its receptor neurons in Drosophila* and other research by David Anderson.

[109] *Must We Burn Sade?* by Simone de Beauvoir

If pleasure is understood as utility, and happiness is the objective of both government and human existence, what does this mean for the problem of deriving pleasure from the pain of others? Liberalism has no solution to this problem. In fact, the order, justice, and material enjoyment of wealthy, liberal societies depends upon the victimization and torment of other societies. The liberal West backs a number of brutal military dictatorships around the world because they are essential to its economic interests. On an individual level, these economic interests take the form of luxurious houses, pleasure trips to exotic locations, and expensive hobbies like boating, skiing, or exotic cars — consumption which itself is driven by desire. Even the lifestyle of having multiple sexual partners and fewer stable marriages is much more expensive, since it requires smaller households and less sharing. This is acceptable, however, for a system that depends on maximizing consumption.

The lavish feasts, luxury items and pastimes of the wealthy, then, are directly linked to the torture dungeons and killing fields in other parts of the world. The link between pleasure and pain does not only manifest in the sexual play of sadism and masochism, but also in the hierarchy of dominance and submission of the international order.

Since consumption is necessary for fueling the power of the military industry, and lust is necessary for fueling consumption, controlling the "means of lust" becomes key to projecting military power. Pushing women to make their sex appeal part of the formal economy, an aim achieved very efficiently by mainstream feminism, is thus essential to modern liberal modes of warfare. Since this monetization is framed as "progress," it is also used to justify wars against societies still practicing traditional gender roles.

Attempting to make men and women equal has depended to a large extent on technology, such as household appliances and pharmaceutical industries producing contraceptives. This technology in turn depends on capital concentrations derived and maintained by colonialism and neo-colonialism. The wealth imbalances that come along with these capital concentrations result in wars and mass migration which threaten to trigger more wars. In other words, maintaining the very imperfect ideals of modern gender inequality actually requires quite a lot of violence, which makes the claim that feminism is a solution to violence caused by patriarchy especially far-fetched.

Feminism itself actually acts as a weapon of war in some ways beyond providing moral justification for invasions of patriarchal societies. The gains that feminism brings to women in industrialized societies, (despite all the side effects and despite the fact these gains depend on global inequality and war) are real. For example, numerous studies have indicated that women in countries with colonial legacies are much more likely to experience domestic violence.[110] The fact that expensive feminist reform campaigns (paid for with the same plunder which contributed to higher domestic violence in colonized countries) do provide real protection, which acts as a strong incentive for women in colonized societies to immigrate. Typically, the only women who are allowed to immigrate are those who are either wealthy or who have exceptional talent that they can use to serve wealthy economies. In this way, the international disparity in gender equality helps to power the "brain drain" and maintain Western hegemony.

To this end, Western countries deploy a host of scholarship programs and education initiatives laden with feminist rhetoric. These programs are intended to identify the most intelligent and talented women, and either recruit them to live and work in the West, or to work on behalf of the West in colonized lands. These workers in turn help to develop more technology and discourse which in turn further advances narratives about gender equality.

Working toward the mainstream ideal of gender equality requires technology and institutions that can only be obtained by the means of the colonial world order, and maintaining this order requires institutionalized violence on a large scale. This is in keeping with Sade's observation that killing, the ultimate act of violence, is also the highest and most pure expression of freedom.

---

[110] For example, see *High-Risk Contexts for Violence Against Women: Using Latent Class Analysis to Understand Structural and Contextual Drivers of Intimate Partner Violence at the National Level* by Brown et al.

Innovation, Salvation, and Contraception

Liberalism as a belief system has many structural parallels to Christianity. In liberalism, technology and economic growth took on many of the same functional roles as the figure of God incarnate in Christ. Most prominently, both belief systems entailed the idea of salvation originating from humans. Just as some later Biblical interpretations believed that the return of Jesus would usher in an earthly paradise free from hunger, pain, and disease; liberals believed that unlocking human ingenuity through science would achieve the same.

Christian theology emphasizes the need for believers to emulate Christ, or to become more godlike. Liberalism helped to fulfill this impulse by means of human-made miracles; seemingly miraculous healing through science.While it may be a perversion of the original intent, this process nonetheless reflects the sentiment of early Christian theologian Athanasius:

> *For the Son of God became man so that we might become God.*[111]

Or as Thomas Aquinas put it:

> *The only-begotten Son of God, wanting to make us sharers in his divinity, assumed our nature, so that he, made man, might make men gods.*[112]

The logic of liberalism, rooted in theological optimism about human nature, had long been lying dormant in Christian thought. Once given the fertile soil of colonial resource surpluses, belief in the divine essence of human beings proliferated. The basis of this belief was the very reasonable idea that God was compassionate and wanted human beings to be happy in their earthly lives. Benjamin Franklin, one of the main architects of the American political experiment, wrote:

---

[111] *On the Incarnation of the Word*, 54:3

[112] *Opusculum*, 57:1-4

Behold the rain which descends from heaven upon our vineyards; there it enters the roots of the vines, to be changed into wine; a constant proof that God loves us, and loves to see us happy.[113]

Pursuit of happiness was enshrined in the US constitution as a fundamental right, legally formalizing the belief in the divine will to happiness. In the context of consumerism, happiness was both a means and an end. In a crude sense, the act of consumption is gratifying and makes people happy. More consumption thus means more happiness. From an economic perspective, increased consumption supports economy of scale, higher production efficiency, and therefore more surplus resources to devote to technological development and the grand vision of progress. From this perspective, high levels of consumption (which women can help unlock) were part of the process of making man into God.

Under socialist and communist regimes, Marx and Lenin became objects of veneration and worship, while in the West innovators like Thomas Edison and Henry Ford were similarly idolized. Across both of these systems, disembedding women from traditional family structures and incorporating them into a techno-industrial system was key to moving toward the promised future.

Optimism about human nature and the world was itself a backlash against the theological pessimism of the pre-modern theology of Western Christendom. Catholicism's emphasis on the virtue of suffering, apparent in the passion of the Christ and the virtue of physical suffering as a form of penitence, along with the doctrine of original sin, justified a condition of misery as a way of emulating Jesus and attaining salvation. This resulted in a moral justification for perpetual misery and economic stagnation.

Liberalism went to the other extreme and flipped this idea on its head; it argued that the fulfillment of human wants was actually the will of God, eventually leading to the idea that the consumption resulting from pursuing desires would bring about the kingdom of God on earth. Since women had a powerful ability to stimulate desire, they would play a central role in this vision. For them to fill this role, however, required discarding notions of

---

[113] *Letter to Abbé Morellet*

morality such as modesty, chastity, and marital fidelity. It also required discarding the deification of Mary as the Holy Mother of God, because depicting fertility and childbirth as an essential virtue was ultimately an impediment to technological development.

Conceiving and raising children is a great source of happiness external to consumption; people without children, on average, spend more money than those with children, because material gratification takes the place of emotional gratification of human relationships. This is apparent in the fact that those countries with the lowest economic performance (according to Western metrics) have the highest fertility, while those with the highest economic performance have the lowest fertility. This is also due to the fact that larger households have higher consumption efficiency,[114] since the members of the households share many items.

High levels of fertility are also detrimental to technological progress in other ways. Researchers and technicians typically need to avoid having children for many years while they study, yet celibacy can lead to a number of emotional and psychological problems. More children per family is also detrimental to technological development, because it means dividing resources for education among more children, resulting in less overall education and specialization. The vision of technological salvation actually has a very anti-human streak built in.

Most high-tech economies are driven by debt, and high fertility is often detrimental for such economies. Consumerism, upon which technological development depends, is driven in large part by the expanding credit and consumers spending beyond their means. Loving and caring for children makes people far more likely to care about the future as they wonder what kind of world their child will live in. People without children, especially if they do not believe in an afterlife, are less likely to be interested in what

[114] Neo-classical economics focuses mainly on production efficiency, which relates to the amount of output relative to inputs such as labor and energy. Consumption efficiency relates to the relationship between usage and waste. For example, a washing machine used by a single person remains idle more than a washing machine used by a family, so a single person household supports production efficiency by generating demand for washing machines, while larger families support consumption efficiency by more effectively using production.

happens after they die, and as such will also be more comfortable with debt-fuelled consumption.

Consumerism requires maximizing productive efficiency via education and innovation, but it must also maximize consumption by means of sexual stimulation. Since sexual stimulation naturally leads to having children, consumerism requires separating fertility and sexual pleasure, making it a natural ally to feminism. Feminists were the main advocates and financiers for the development of contraception. Katherine McCormick, an early suffragist and heiress to a large fortune, almost single-handedly funded the development of oral contraceptives along with Margaret Sanger, the founder of Planned Parenthood. Interestingly, Sanger was also a lover of H.G. Wells, who is sometimes described as "the father of science fiction." In a way, her work in developing contraceptives contributed to Wells' vision of a high-tech future.

Once sexuality and reproduction were divorced, it became possible to harness the power of desire without the responsibility of parenthood. This helped to render notions of morality surrounding sexuality obsolete; modesty and chastity had previously served to protect the integrity of families, but now that sex was purely about individual pleasure, such feminine virtues became little more than a matter of consumer preference. With sexual morality dismissed as "old-fashioned," human sexuality could be fully directed toward the monetization of human life and consumption, which in turn fed the development of science and technology within the grand schema of the theology of progress.

Theological Optimism and Disposable Culture

A culture of disposable goods is key for maximizing consumption. The sooner people throw away items, the sooner they can buy new ones. This has important social implications, since consumerism generates a conceptual link between products and people. Four intellectual shifts made the culture of wastefulness possible, if not inevitable.

Firstly, theological optimism makes people more optimistic about future resource availability. This leads to a belief that there are enough natural

resources to sustain high rates of consumption. The rise of classical economics in general represented a shift toward theological optimism. Catholicism, with its emphasis on original sin, penitence, and martyrdom, understood suffering and misery to be core to the purpose of life. With this perspective, why would someone believe in an inexhaustible abundance of natural resources? Rather, famine and shortages were necessary to purify sins and secure salvation.

Many Protestants rejected Catholic doctrines about asceticism and the basic evil of human desires, leading to Smith's idea that giving human nature free rein would lead to the most harmonious outcomes for humanity. This theological shift is the foundation of economic liberalism. If God created the world with the intention of making human existence happy, then it would follow that the world would contain an abundance of natural resources.

Secondly, optimism about God's will and millenarian ideas about the kingdom of God on earth, as well as more fundamental doctrines about imitating Jesus, led to the idea of human nature as perfectible. For those who viewed humanity as perfectible, and who saw (resource intensive) education and technology as part of the quest for perfection, sexual liberation eventually became a sort of sacred duty, as it can unlock the economic growth necessary for pursuing the improvement of humanity.

Thirdly, individualism shifted the focus from the needs of families or of society to the needs of individuals. This led to more emphasis on short term economic growth rather than long term sustainability. An individualistic perspective is bounded by a lifespan of less than a hundred years. As such, this perspective will downplay the long-term consequences of environmental damage and resource depletion resulting from mass consumption.

Individualism also enabled discarding sexual morality which had previously protected families. The liberated woman is the one who can enter totally into the market as a public good, rather than the private domain of her husband and family. In this scheme, individuals, rather than families, are the basic building block of the society, so society must strive toward the satisfaction of the individual rather than the preservation of the family. The destruction of the family becomes the key to the liberation of the individual.

Fourthly, the conceptual conflation of the infinite and the material world greatly contributed to the theological foundation for consumerism. As

the West gradually turned away from revelation as a source of truth, they turned to nature and natural sciences instead. Seeking to escape the bloody wars of religion and intractable debates about scripture, Europeans hoped to find common ground in science.

With this shift came a rise in the popularity of deism, which conceived God as manifest in nature. Christendom was already primed for this shift, since Christians had been taught for centuries to believe in the appearance of God in human form. This represents a complete breakdown of the division between God (the infinite) and the material world (the finite). If nature and the material world are understood as being a manifestation of God, or to *be* God, then nature and the material world would take on the attributes of God, including endlessness.

As very resource intensive ideologies, liberalism and feminism both require and foster this kind of theological optimism. Resources must be available for enough education and technological development to abolish traditional gender roles, or else the entire mission is doomed from the start. Believing in the existence of adequate resources to complete the mission, then, is an article of faith in this belief system. This in turn requires belief in future technological development, because such technology will be necessary for obtaining these resources.

This theological stance also affects human relationships. It leads not only to a belief in an abundance of natural resources, but also of emotional resources. Christianity placed love at the center of its cosmology, going so far as to equate God and love:

> "Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love."[115]

While this started out as an abstract, divine love, it eventually gave rise to ideas about human love being infinite. These ideas are closely related to the hope for an earthly utopia of peace and abundance; if humans could only unlock their capacity for divine infinite love, then they could all work together to bring about the kingdom of God on earth.

---

[115] John 1 4:8

There is a conundrum here that directly relates to theological optimism. If love is indeed infinite, then it would be possible to achieve peace on earth by spreading Christianity and loving your enemy.[116] If, however, love is not infinite, this mandate would lead to giving love to those who are unworthy of it, depriving love from those who are worthy, and enabling all kinds of oppression and corruption. In fact, even if human love has a spiritual component, it also has material components — neurotransmitters, mental energy, time, and physical gifts are all part of love, and dependent on material inputs.

The Christian emphasis on love eventually contributed to sexual liberation of the counterculture movement, which became an important part of "second wave" feminism. During this period, feminists portrayed marriage as a patriarchal institution by which men controlled and dominated women and by which the love of both men and women was limited and restrained. The logic of liberation demanded that people be free to love whoever they want. Since free love stimulated desire and drove consumption, it also fit with the general character of the theology of progress. So the notion of the material world and the infinite being a single continuum helped to lay the conceptual groundwork for treating both consumer goods and sexual partners as disposable.

The reality of the culture of "free love" is that it may actually decrease overall levels of love in relationships. Some neurological studies suggest that having a larger number of sexual partners actually decreases the capacity for bonding, particularly for women.[117] Bonding, whether with objects or people, is an attitude and a habit. As a person develops an attitude of treating objects as disposable, they also will develop a similar attitude toward human relationships. As people develop the habit of using things and throwing them away rather than caring for them and repairing them, they also develop a tendency to use people and throw them away rather than working on relationships and forming lasting bonds.

This is a bit of a "chicken or egg" type question. Did a disposable attitude toward consumer goods lead to a disposable relationship toward

---

[116] A reference to Luke 6:27.

[117] See *Oxytocin and Social Relationships: From Attachment to Bond Disruption* by Bosch and Young.

relationships, or vice versa? The process was simultaneous, largely due to marketing which mentally connected women with consumable products or presented women themselves as consumable products. Men could bond with a constant stream of actresses, singers, and models in advertisements and entertainment, discarding the old objects of desire when new, more appealing ones appeared. Women likewise could bond with media heartthrobs and singers, as well as fictional romance characters. A constant supply of novelty in the realm of media helped to generate a constant demand for novelty in the market for goods and services. Every year, advertisements could hire new models to keep customers interested, and men and women could continuously fall in love with new figures in entertainment.

All of these fantasy relationships generated an unprecedented engine for consumption, but the number of real relationships people had steadily decreased.[118] The unhappiness that resulted from declining real connections with others further fuelled consumption, as people sought more gratification by spending money on fictional characters or goods and services mentally connected with attractive individuals.

All of this was possible only because of women needing (or believing that they needed) to become financially independent. Women seeking employment, particularly as actresses and models, was key to the development of consumer culture, especially by way of sexualized advertising. Women in sales and service harnessed the power of sexual novelty and directed it toward consumption. Women entering into the formal labor force also made possible a culture of disposable relationships to complement the burgeoning culture of disposable products.

Sexuality and Social Control

Under liberalism, the purpose of government is theoretically to serve the people. What that service should look like is meant to be defined by the people themselves. Most often, it means helping them to fulfill their desires. The means of fulfilling these desires is money, and the means of obtaining money

[118] See *US trends in social isolation, social engagement, and companionship* by Viji Diane Kannon and other similar research.

is economic activity and growth. Accordingly, a large amount of discussion in modern politics revolves around creating jobs and supporting economic growth.

In other words, the key to political power in liberalism is the capacity to gratify the desires of the people. It is clear how this would necessarily lead to the sexualization of public life and high rates of consumption. More opportunities for sexual stimulation and gratification mean more political legitimacy for a government, since it has succeeded in satisfying the people. This generates a clear incentive for governments to facilitate obtaining pleasure as much as possible.

While modern modes of labor can generate large surpluses of wealth (partly by means of access to colonial resources), they also take a heavy psychological toll. This is most obvious in the dehumanizing monotony of factory labor, but also in the tedium of bureaucracy and office work. Many modern workplaces such as factories, retail outlets, or office buildings are not optimally conducive to human happiness and health. Many of those who work in these places spend their lives looking forward to the weekend or their next vacation. Entertainment is an important part of making this lifestyle viable, because otherwise the combination of stress and boredom could be overwhelming.

Sources of sensual and sexual pleasure offer a welcome distraction and make it easier to swallow the depression that comes with life as a wage slave. With mass media, sexual stimulation can be summoned on demand to help workers forget their pain, or at least counterbalance it with pleasure.

Liberalism is built on a social contract; the state provides us what we want, and so we consent to its rule. The more the state can offer, the more it can take, and the more powerful it becomes. The more women can be convinced to put their beauty, personalities, and sexuality on the open market in exchange for government-issued currency, the more valuable that currency will become. The more options the people have for fulfilling their desires, the stronger the legitimacy of the state will become

This perpetual cycle of chasing desires leaves little time for contemplating issues of morality or a higher purpose, because there is always something compelling and attention grabbing available for men, and women are constantly menaced with the threat of becoming unwanted and

unfashionable. Through constant stimulation, people may become consumed by desires and be neutralized as potential threats to the state.

Consumerism, beyond being an engine for economic growth and efficiency, is also a mechanism for social control. Opposing or overthrowing the state requires deep principles and willingness to sacrifice. The more focused people become on the pursuit of pleasure, the less likely they are to be concerned about deeper moral issues, and the less likely they are to do anything that could cause them to lose access to pleasure.

Mass consumption of sexualized media and advertisement was thus a refinement of the Roman concept of *panem et circenses* as a means of pacifying the population. Sexualized media helped to increase consumption, thus increasing industrial efficiency, lowering prices, and making consumer goods (including food) cheaper. At the same time, it helped people to numb any dissatisfaction they might have and distract them from the moral failings of society with an endless stream of entertainment and stimulation.

Leveraging the power of female sexuality was vital, then, to the stability of the state as well as the grand historical narrative of the theology of progress. The entire power structure of modern governance rests, then, on convincing women that becoming drivers of consumerism is liberation and that traditional gender roles are oppressive.

Chapter 10

The Future of Feminism

The struggles and triumphs of liberalism, including all the economic growth and technological progress, are aimed at bringing about a golden age of equality and justice. Technological advances will improve the condition of women so that they can no longer be abused or exploited by men. Gender roles will become obsolete, with men and women being equal partners in labor and family, eliminating patriarchal hierarchies. Decisions in families, corporations and government will be made democratically through consultation between men and women. Positions and promotions will be granted purely on the basis of merit, without any consideration of gender. Women will be equally represented at all levels of commerce, industry, and government.

This is feminism's eschatology, or vision of the future; a heaven on earth of gender equality. Although feminism is very much Western in origin, this vision holds itself to be universal and applicable to all of humanity. Third wave feminism sought to expand the scope of feminism, formulating new "feminisms" more compatible with diverse cultures.[119]

How viable is this vision? Is it truly possible to abolish patriarchy? What are the consequences of trying? What would be the consequences of succeeding? Much of the feminist movement's focus has been on improving the immediate conditions of individual women, with relatively little thought given to what long-term side effects of these changes might be. What are the material requirements of achieving feminist objectives? What psychological and emotional effects does it have? Are there any unintended side effects, and if so, how will those effects impact societies shaped by feminist reforms? What is the current trajectory of feminism as a civilizational project? Can this project achieve its goals, and if not, what will come of pursuing these goals?

---

[119] First wave feminism is usually considered as starting with the movement for women's suffrage and continuing until the 1960's. Second wave feminism came after this and continued until the 1990's. It was focused on women's sexual freedom and labor rights, but still mainly articulated by ethnically European women. Third wave feminism sought to contextualize the aims of feminism to include other identity groups and "universalize" feminism by developing concepts of "intersectionality," which account more fully for various aspects of identity.

There are many powerful actors (and certainly not only women) who have strong vested interests in painting an idealized picture of the impact and future potential of feminist reforms, so these questions represent highly politicized terrain. This chapter considers some of the overlooked consequences of the ongoing decline of traditional gender roles and their implications for the future of Western civilization and the liberal world order.

The Ecological Cost of Equality

The project to abolish patriarchy is only truly viable if the means exist to achieve it. Modern feminist reforms have been highly dependent on resource-intensive technological development. But current modes of technological production are completely unsustainable. This begs the question, can humanity actually afford feminism? Can the earth's resources actually sustain feminist social structures over the long term?

To answer this question, we have to first evaluate the costs of abolishing patriarchy once and for all. These costs can be divided into two categories; direct costs of implementing feminist reforms, and secondary costs resulting from these reforms. The widespread distribution of technology that makes traditional gendered labor unnecessary is one example of a direct cost of implementing feminist reforms, while higher rates of divorce resulting from working outside the home are an indirect cost resulting from these reforms.[120]

Consider the direct costs of feminism in terms of consumption of non-renewable resources. More individualism (including women more independent of their families) leads to smaller households and more consumption. While this boosts economic metrics like GDP, it demands more natural resources. The "Gender Equality Index," a metric developed by the United Nations for measuring gender equality, ranks wealthy Western societies as having the highest levels of gender equality. Western, especially Scandinavian, countries consistently rank at the top of the list.

---

[120] Putra et al., *The Phenomenon of Working Women with the Causes of Divorce*

Countries with high levels of gender equality according to these metrics also have some of the largest ecological footprints.[121] Generally speaking, gender equality correlates to higher rates of consumption. Countries like Sweden, Denmark, Finland, France, Switzerland, and the Netherlands consistently top rankings of gender equality, and are also among the top consumers of natural resources, despite extensive efforts to move toward sustainability. Conversely, many of the countries with the *least* gender equality have the smallest ecological footprints. These countries include Afghanistan, Chad, Yemen, Mali, and Papua New Guinea.

Countries with low gender equality are also some of the poorest according to conventional economic measures. Overall, higher levels of gender equality correlate to higher GDP and overall economic performance. This is part of what makes gender equality so vital to the theology of progress; liberalism understands gender equality as both a means and an end to economic growth.

The correlation between gender equality and economic growth is often cited to justify implementing feminist policies worldwide, and implicitly, military interventions linked to the mission of universal gender equality. Advocates of gender equality as a means to economic growth rarely mention that countries with high levels of gender equality are depleting the earth's natural resources and causing serious environmental damage. This calls into question if it is even physically possible to achieve liberal ideals of gender equality for all of humanity.

There are a few countries with high gender equity and lower income, such as Nicaragua and Namibia. However, these countries are home to numerous internationally-funded programs that actively promote gender equality. Funding for these programs comes mainly from wealthy Western nations via the United Nations and other non-governmental organizations. In some cases, governments in low-income countries with high gender equality

[121] Ecological footprint is a metric which considers consumption patterns within a country to assess if there are enough resources on the earth to sustain that lifestyle for the whole planet. According to the Ecological Footprint Network, it would require around five times the resources available on earth if everyone were to live according to the living standard of an American. For everyone to live like Germans would require around three earths, and to have the same average living standard as China would require 2.4 earths.

receive loans and aid conditional on implementing feminist reforms. In other cases, funding comes with recommendations about pursuing gender equality and surveillance mechanisms, such as monitoring the number of women entering the formal labor force. The implication in such cases is that international donors will be watching the level of gender equality, and that it will influence future decisions about funding.

It's unlikely that gender equality in low-income countries would be possible on the same level without extensive involvement by high-income, high gender equality countries.

Despite the existence of some outliers like Nicaragua and Namibia, the vast majority of societies with high levels of gender equality are ecologically unsustainable. Western Europe, North America, Australia and other Western countries are highly dependent on nonrenewable resources like coal, oil, and gas. They also depend either directly or indirectly on damaging renewable resource bases like oceans and forests. Although these countries have made much effort to become less environmentally destructive and more sustainable within their own territory, they continue to depend on cheap imports from countries that engage in destructive environmental practices.

Many feminist authors critique the unsustainability of modern economies, and actually blame this destructive behavior on patriarchy. Nonetheless, there are no concrete, viable examples of sustainable societies that have achieved anything resembling modern ideals of gender equality without some dependence on environmentally destructive practices. In fact, even a great deal of feminist discourse is produced by writers and theorists who depend on funding from unsustainable and environmentally-destructive states.

Most feminist theorists align with some form of Marxism or anarchism, but practically speaking, every real world implementation of Marxist theory has depended on technology flows from Western economies. This casts further doubt on the viability of political and economic models proposed by feminist theorists.

Liberal governance in general has always depended on unsustainable rates of resource consumption, and pursuit of gender equality has long been a key part of liberal governance. Despite the fact that modern modes of

production destroyed more than half of the world's forests and coral reefs to achieve the economic growth of the last century, most feminists are still unsatisfied even with the relatively high levels of gender equality in the wealthiest societies. Even to achieve this very imperfect implementation of feminism globally would require far more resources than are presently available on the earth.

This is one key motivating factor behind liberalism's fascination with traveling in and colonizing space. Colonizing space could potentially provide resources to maintain or expand resource intensive modern gender roles and the broader economic system that depends on them. Renewable energy could help to maintain existing levels of gender equality in the face of depleting reserves of non-renewable energy sources like oil, gas, and uranium.

All possible energy sources in space are far beyond current technological capacity, and would require vast investments in research and development even to investigate their viability. Until now, investment into space exploration and exploitation has been prohibitively expensive and has yielded no return at all in terms of resources. As for renewable energy, wind, hydroelectric, hydrogen and solar energy production depend on mining and recycling to obtain the necessary materials, such as copper for electric motors, turbines, and transmission lines and lithium for batteries.

Most mining and recycling currently runs on non-renewable energy sources such as diesel and coal. There is currently no alternative to diesel fuel for many essential types of mining equipment. Mineral sources are also becoming more scarce. As reserves in mines dwindle, it becomes more costly in terms of fuel to extract minerals using machines like excavators and crushers. The equipment used in industrial scale mining also requires metals that are mined or recycled, transported, and refined using non-renewable energy sources. This equipment is also manufactured using non-renewable energy in many cases.

Even with fuel prices relatively stable, metal prices have surged in recent years, partly due to increased demand from the renewable energy sector. Increases in energy prices as supplies dwindle will further push up the price of essential materials, causing general price inflation which translates to even higher energy prices, which then affects the price of industrial and consumer goods. This pattern is already underway and will compound on itself

by making mining, maintenance and manufacturing, and therefore energy, ever more costly.

This holds true even in the absence of a major geopolitical conflict. Assuming that there will be no such conflict is naive to say the least, because as energy prices rise, conflicts over energy become more likely. War is highly resource intensive, and will aggravate shortages and further push up energy prices. War will also cause major production efficiency losses because the global economy is currently highly dependent on regional specialization and international trade. The technological progress of past decades has come in large part from increasing specialization and integration of more economies into a single, unified market governed by the principles of liberalism. De-globalization, which is certain to occur with the division of the world into competing geopolitical blocs, means tremendous efficiency losses, rising prices, and lower standard of living worldwide.

This has serious implications for technology. Rising prices of energy and raw materials will affect the viability of many productive processes, decreasing profitability. Complex equipment in particular will become more expensive since it is more reliant on complex globalized supply chains. As international shipping becomes more expensive, high-tech, service oriented economies will be forced to shift back toward manufacturing.

This will reduce the importance of a number of service oriented industries, in particular international finance, banking, and insurance. These industries are actually vital for coordinating distribution of resources in the global economy, so this shift back toward local manufacturing actually represents a decentralization of power much like what occurred during the decline of the Roman empire. In other words, after a peak of centralization, the pendulum swings back toward decentralization.

Belief in progress as a civilizational project and a means of salvation has been an important characteristic of Western thought for several centuries. Faced with a looming crisis of declining resources and ecological damage, many in the West place their hope in innovation. They hope that technological innovation, whether new power generation technologies or space mining, will save humanity from this decline. This is a matter of faith supported more by hope than any real data. This faith is almost certainly misplaced. For decades, the rate of innovation has been steadily declining, and the amount of energy required for technological advancement has been increasing. In other words, technological progress is getting more expensive while yielding fewer productivity gains.[122]

As innovation gets more expensive, so too does the level of wealth centralization necessary to power continued innovation. This means that inequality is also on the rise, with the gap between the rich and poor steadily growing. Severe inequality has a number of negative externalities, such as increased illegal immigration, more crime, and decreased consumer spending.[123] Dealing with crime and immigration takes away resources from innovation, while lower consumption weakens the economy overall, generating deflationary pressure as people buy less. This is especially problematic for economic models that rely on continuous economic growth, as is the case with liberal economies that run on interest-based debt. Sustained periods of economic contraction can cause cascading systemic failure for such economies.

The race for innovation, then, is actually draining and weakening the liberal world order. The quest for a technological miracle to escape from entropy increases resource consumption and economic inequality, which leads to more social problems and conflict, which in turn puts more pressure on existing technology production. Believers in the theology of progress are

---

[122] See *Are New Ideas Getting Harder to Find?* By Nicholas Bloom et al.

[123] Wealth inequality decreases consumption since a large amount of money controlled by one rich person results in much less consumption than if the same amount of money were distributed among many more people. For example, an ultra rich person will usually buy two or three houses at most, whereas if his fortune were distributed among a thousand people, each of the thousand would likely purchase a single house.

thus faced with the conundrum of either giving up on their religious hope for a technological miracle or aggravating social instability which will ultimately also undermine research and development. Theologically speaking, this is the behavior of a society that believes that the infinite (another word for the divine) is contained within human beings. The economic and social problems arising from these beliefs are a reality check calling the people to reassess their beliefs.

The material and ideological consequences of this situation have serious implications for feminism and feminists. As conflict escalates, countries with the highest levels of gender equality will be forced to return to manufacturing, which will reduce the size of the service sector. In most countries which lead gender equality ratings, women typically make up between 60-80% of the service sector, whereas only 20-30% of industrial jobs are held by women. Women are also over-represented in entertainment and retail sectors, and economic decline in general will hit these industries harder than agriculture and manufacturing, where more men are employed.

In other words, economic decline appears inevitable, and this decline will likely give men a greater competitive advantage on the labor market. Even if economic decline is further off, the rising prevalence of artificial intelligence will hit the service sector much harder than skilled labor such as construction and manufacturing. In either case, either sooner or later, it will become more difficult for women to support themselves on independent incomes.

Any serious economic or technological decline has the potential to make traditional feminine labor like spinning and weaving, gardening, and care for children or elderly within a family context more competitive relative to mechanized mass production. More home-based production could also increase the value of children, potentially restoring some of the lost value of motherhood. In short, war along with economic and technological decline would restore much of the intrinsic economic value of masculinity and femininity and the types of labor that traditionally went along with them.

This presents an existential challenge to feminism. So far, most feminist reforms depended on resource intensive institutional configurations like the modern state, industrial production, and a colonial trade world order. If these institutions lose access to the resources they need to survive, will feminism be able to survive without them? If families once again become vital

to the economic fabric of society, preserving families will become a matter of existential importance. This spells a decline in the popularity of feminism.

Based on our present knowledge of the earth's resources, such a failure is inevitable. Despite a few centuries of industrialization, human biology is still well-adapted to a gendered division of labor. The survival of feminism, both as an ideology and as a civilizational project under the schema of the theology of progress, depends on somehow escaping entropy.

Aside from arguments about the potential of technology to somehow unlock vast new energy reserves, consider the historical perspective. Throughout history, every complex civilization has experienced decline and loss of technological and institutional capacity. Why should we believe that the modern world order will be any different? Patterns in history can tell us about the laws of nature as much as watching any other natural phenomena.

Feminism plays an important role in the maintenance of the modern state, industry, and the financial sector. Likewise, the ideal of independent women depends heavily on these institutions. If these institutions decline in importance, feminism is likely to decline as well, and if feminism declines in popularity, it will weaken industry, state, and finance. This process can compound on itself from both sides — as modern institutions weaken, people will turn back to traditional ideologies and lose faith in liberalism. As more people turn toward traditional lifestyles, modern institutions will further weaken, further compounding the process.

Technology, Conflict, and Decline

Although liberalism, feminism, and the theology of progress in general hold peace as one of their major goals, they tend inevitably toward war because of their dependence on abundant resources. The dream of gender equality depends on technology making the gendered division of labor obsolete. Modern technology enables automating domestic work, producing contraceptives, facilitates female labor force participation, and reduces the need for childbearing, all of which enable women to pursue careers and independent income. Even feminist discourse depends on wealth surpluses to

fund women's studies departments and women's rights organizations, and these wealth surpluses depend on technology.

War was essential to developing this technology, and it is essential for maintaining it. The development of modern technology occurred in the context of colonialism. In modern times, neo-colonialism by means of conditional "development" loans, selective immigration policies, and military aid and/or interventions help to maintain zones with very cheap labor and commodities vital for the modern world economy. Although the amount of violence needed to maintain this system varies with time, overall, this system has tended toward ever more intense violence.

To see this violence requires taking a long-term historical perspective. Modern industrial economies exhibit boom-bust cycles, where the economy rapidly expands and then contracts. Economic contractions are often followed by wars — a stagnant economy was a major factor in the buildup to the First World War, and a global financial crisis was a key factor in bringing Hitler to power prior to the Second World War. This dynamic is not as complex as it might seem at first — throughout history, higher levels of economic inequality consistently precede major wars, and inequality decreases in the aftermath of wars.[124] Modern technological development is highly dependent on capital concentration, and economic inequality is a byproduct of capital concentration.

There is a strong correlation between technological advancement and gender equality. This is visible both spatially and temporally; nations with more complex technology tend to have higher levels of gender equality, and historically gender equality increased along with technological complexity. Not all feminists see technology as an essential means of achieving gender equality, but none deny the role of modern technology in rising levels of gender equality over the last century.

This points to a real conundrum; most feminists critique modern political and economic systems as destructive and innately patriarchal, but it

---

[124] In *The Great Leveler: Violence and the History of Inequality from the Stone Age to the Twenty-First Century* Walter Scheidel documents evidence that wars throughout history arise when economic inequality increases, and that greater wealth distribution results in their aftermath.

was these destructive and patriarchal patterns that enabled the development of modern levels of gender equality. No one has a clear path out of this conundrum; some feminists like Vandana Shiva and Maria Mies idealize decentralized, agrarian societies, but the reality is that a return to such societies on a large scale would mean a collapse in modern technological capacity, making modern gender roles impossible.

To maintain modern gender roles requires not only maintaining current levels of technology, but also developing new technologies. This is due to pressures generated by the modern world economy itself. For example, the world economy needs ultra-cheap labor, like the laborers who mine rare earths in Africa, or textile and garment workers in South Asia. This cheap labor depends on miserable conditions which leads to illegal immigration and geopolitical instability. New military and border security technologies are then necessary to mitigate illegal immigration and geopolitical instability.

In the West, the number of plots by the far right and Islamic fundamentalist elements (both staunchly anti-feminist) is increasing. Well-funded, high tech law enforcement agencies prevent these movements from proliferating by means of mass surveillance. Satellites, drones, and guided missiles suppress insurgencies in societies with less technological infrastructure. As inequality continues to mount worldwide, immigration flows increase, and drones, artificial intelligence, advanced imagery and sensors, and biometric data analysis control migrant flows.

As people have more difficulty migrating in search of opportunities, the recruiting base for insurgencies grows, requiring more advanced military technologies. Developing new technologies for managing both border security and insurgencies in turn requires more capital concentration and more economic inequality, which then leads to more inequality and more instability.

What happens if an economic crisis or major conflict disrupts the ability to maintain, operate, and further develop these technologies? Any failure in this wall of technological defenses will open a floodgate, unleashing violence and chaos which threatens the foundations of liberalism. Islamist and right wing terrorist attacks in the West, burgeoning Islamic insurgencies in Africa and the Middle East, and mass illegal immigration all energize ethnic

nationalist movements in the West. These movements are generally quite anti-globalist, and modern technology is highly dependent on globalization.

Anti-globalist, ethnic nationalist movements in the West have already intensified global conflict, most notably in the election of US president Donald Trump and the subsequent trade war with China. The rise of this political trend is directly related to the issues of illegal immigration and a wave of terrorist attacks in Western countries committed by Muslims, and both of these issues are related to the maintenance of the world order upon which modern technology depends. Economic inequality drives illegal immigration, and subverting political will in Muslim countries for the sake of Western economic interest motivates violence by Islamic groups. Both severe economic inequality and geopolitical subversion of Muslim majority countries are necessary for the smooth functioning of the world economic system under liberalism. To summarize, liberalism's rise contained the seeds of its downfall.

The conflict resulting from the inequality and oppression necessary to power technological development will undermine technological capacity and efficiency in several ways. Most technological development since the Second World War depended on integrating more economies into the global economy, but increased conflict will lead to the formation of competing geopolitical and economic blocs. With less global integration, industrial production will lose access to many markets, resulting in less economy of scale. Less global integration of regional economies will also reduce economy of scale for freight, making shipping more expensive and shifting competitive advantage toward local production. As production becomes more localized, the prices of imports and shipping will increase even more, incentivizing even further localization of production in a compounding cycle.

As this process of localization leads to economic decline, conflicts over resources will ensue, further draining economies and straining resources necessary for technological production. There is no escaping this process. Complex systems, like organisms, are subject to the laws of entropy.

All of the data point to a future technological decline, but it is very difficult to say how fast this decline will occur. Regardless of how and when it happens, the question remains: can feminism survive a major technological decline? Any serious decline will mean a restoration of the economic importance of biological factors such as male physical strength and

endurance. The economic decline that would accompany technological decline would make it more difficult to obtain contraceptives, and for women to independently maintain households. It would also make it more difficult to obtain or maintain things like food processors, blenders, refrigerators, washing machines, and mass produced clothing and textiles which supplanted traditional domestic labor.

A technological and economic decline would narrow the competitive advantage of globalized industry over families as modes of organizing production. The bigger the decline, the more economic advantages there will be for families and ideologies that support the preservation of families. Conversely, it will lead to a decline in the appeal of ideologies that support modern states, finance, and industry. Just as feminism rose to prominence with the rise of modern institutions, it is likely to decline with those institutions.

This is already visible to some extent in the "trad wife" internet trend, a phenomena of internet users promoting and idealizing traditional gender roles. The trad wife trend is actually promoted mostly by women, consistent with the idea that feminism actually represents male interests in many ways.

Demographic Crisis and Immigration

All major technology-producing economies have fertility rates below the replacement rate. This effectively means that these nations, while technologically advanced, are dying. The reasons for this are up for debate, but many of the causes are certainly linked to feminism. The most direct and obvious cause is the fact that pushing women to seek higher education and have independent careers has led to mass use of contraceptives and abortion. A number of surveys indicate that in relationships it is more often women who do not want to have more children, often because of the double burden of working outside the home and caring for children at the same time.

Even if a woman wishes to have children, it is also very difficult to find a man who is willing to commit. Many women complain of searching for

years for a man who is both willing to commit and mentally and financially stable. In high-tech economies, online dating is increasingly common, which makes it more difficult for women to find a suitable partner. The reason for this is that when presented within hundreds or thousands of potential choices, women gravitate to the most appealing men who are typically attractive and financially successful. The result is that these highly desirable men have an abundance of women to choose from, and can easily enjoy jumping from woman to woman without committing, leaving behind a trail of heartbroken women who hoped that they could convince these men to love them and stay with them.

Pushing feminine beauty into the formal economy also takes a toll on society. The commercialization of feminine beauty leaves many men with unrealistic expectations and dissatisfied with their relationships. Likewise, mass media gives many women unrealistic and idealized expectations about romance. Since there is no real economic need for marriage, even if a man does commit to a woman, he can walk away at any time with no real consequences, leaving her to struggle as a single mother. It is not surprise then that the demographic crisis is driven more by women than men.

Cultural or religious expectations of marital fidelity also continue to decline. Studies show that premarital sex weakens the overall capacity for marital bonding, leading to higher divorce rates and lower fertility. The financialization of society contributes to high inflation and cost of living crises that leave many worried about the expense of raising children. The long education period required to produce technology means that children are unproductive into their twenties, and even then are under no real obligation to support their parents. What real incentive is there to have children, besides fulfilling some primal instinct?

Technology has increased overall production but comes with a number of side effects that negatively affect fertility, including high levels of radiation, contamination of food by growth hormones, synthetic fertilizers, heavy metals and microplastics. While it's not clear if pollution is actually increasing infertility, what is certain is that testosterone rates among men are dropping and people are having sex less.

Governments in many high-tech states have attempted to offer cash incentives and tax breaks for people who have children, but so far these

measures have failed to address falling fertility. Demographic balances are shifting, with fewer young people and more older people. Many youth in high-tech economies are either uninterested in or unqualified for many vital jobs. Major technology producing economies are suffering from serious skilled labor shortages, and turning to immigration to fill the gap.

This is problematic from multiple angles. As migration intensifies, the cultural unity of technology producing nations declines, and so does the popular backlash from native citizens. Lower classes are largely unemployed or underemployed due to globalization and labor-saving technologies. Making matters worse, many high paying jobs go to skilled immigrant labor, while illegal immigrants compete wages for unskilled or semi-skilled labor, pushing down wages. As a result, anti-immigration political parties are making major gains in the West. A growing number of fringe groups advocate violence to prevent what they see as the destruction of their cultural and ethnic identity.

Anti-immigration political parties are generally critical or hostile toward feminist rhetoric. For many on the right, this criticism is related to the "great replacement" theory. This theory holds that there is a conspiracy to eliminate the "white race." Feminist discourse is one important factor driving lower fertility rates, and immigrants with less feminist influence typically have higher fertility rates. Some elements among the extreme right believe that feminism is part of this conspiracy. Anders Breivik, a right wing extremist who committed the largest anti-immigration massacre in history, advocated this idea in his manifesto.

Anti-feminism aligns with anti-immigration as a means of preserving the "white race." It's ironic that most white nationalists view Western technological and economic development as evidence of their superiority, but at the same time fail to recognize that feminism, which was essential to this development, is in fact more responsible for the decline of the "white race" than immigrants.

Internal contradictions notwithstanding, the rise of anti-immigration and ethno-nationalist sentiment in high tech economies continues to rise. There are also no signs that the escalation of this trend will slow or stop in the foreseeable future. Maintaining the global hierarchy depends on technology, and technology depends on high levels of wealth inequality and feminist rhetoric that suppresses fertility rates. As long as inequality stays high and

fertility stays low, both legal and illegal immigration are inevitable. As long as immigration continues, anti-immigration movements will grow stronger.

Nationalistic policies, including anti-immigration policies, give more jobs to native citizens, but the overall efficiency and quality of production suffers as a result. As anti-globalization movements gain influence, efficiency and productivity will decline, making everything more expensive and reducing tax revenues. At the same time, these movements will push more reforms like revoking citizenship of immigrants, raising more barriers to citizenship, increasing deportations of non-natives, and legally marginalizing those from immigrant backgrounds. More hostile legal conditions for immigrants will trigger reverse migration and further aggravate labor shortages, causing more supply chain problems and pushing up cost of living and commodity prices even higher. As economic conditions worsen, anti-immigrant sentiment (and with it, anti-feminist sentiment) will also further intensify in a vicious cycle.

Suppose that pro-immigration camps prevail and stop the growth of anti-immigration factions, enabling continued technological development. This will still lead to serious problems with the overall cultural cohesion of society. A lot of resources already go into assimilation programs which condition immigrants and prepare them to work in Western societies. However, many immigrants simply do not share Western values and do not work well in the same contexts as ethnic Europeans. Different cultural values and the breakdown of strong ethnic identities hurts overall social cohesion.

Sense of ethnic belonging is directly related to mental health, with a weak sense of identity linked to both mental illness and crime. Individuals having a sense of belonging in a community is vital to the health of the community. Anti-immigrant sentiment erodes this sensation by making those from immigrant backgrounds feel unwelcome, and those who don't feel like they are part of the society don't feel that harming the society harms themselves. This drives both crime and violent events like anti-immigrant riots.

Crime is already a major factor driving anti-immigrant sentiment, and if nothing is done to suppress this trend, the costs of law enforcement will steadily mount. If the cost of law enforcement related to immigrants exceeds the benefits that immigrants bring to a society, that society will simply stop

supporting immigration. Rising inequality associated with technological production fueled by interest-bearing debt aggravates the situation. It means that upper classes benefit more from immigration than lower classes. In other words, lower class tax payers carry more and more of the burden of immigration, while wealthy elites reap the benefits.

Aside from political and economic pressure, continued immigration also puts pressure on feminism for the simple reason that most immigrants are more religious than those who have lived in industrial and post-industrial economies for generations. Traditional religious value systems encourage traditional gender roles. Muslim immigrants do not have the core theological values that underlie feminism, so the authentic message of Islam will always clash with feminism, no matter how much energy goes into developing supposedly "Islamic feminism."

The idea that secularism and religious pluralism is a source of strength is increasingly coming under fire, in particular by the far right. For the West, secularism was initially a way of mitigating destructive doctrinal disputes among Christians. However, with large-scale immigration by Muslims, Hindus, and East Asians, the divide between core values is growing much stronger. When it comes to social cohesion, both ethnic and religious factors matter. An ethnically diverse society may be able to hold together on the basis of strongly held values, such as liberalism. A religiously diverse society may be able to hold together on the basis of shared ethnicity. However, if there is neither ethnic or religious unity, what basis for cohesion is there?

The importance of social cohesion, just like the importance of the structural integrity of a bridge or building, does not become apparent until the structure comes under pressure. In periods of relative abundance, a society with little religious or ethnic cohesion may hold together just fine, but during a serious economic crisis or war, the fault lines can turn into bigger divides, leading to a collapse. Likewise, a poorly constructed bridge may do just fine with light traffic, but collapse when a heavy load attempts to cross it.

Feminism and the fabric of Western society in general are ultimately based upon beliefs. People who come from the religious heritage of the Western Roman empire and the Catholic Church have these beliefs imprinted on their psyche. This is not only an issue of material interests, but of collective

memory and history. Deep down, the extent to which individuals resonate with liberal principles depends on collective memory of events like the European wars of religion and severe oppression of women in the Western legal and cultural tradition. Whether this is related to genetic memory or inter-generational socialization, those who do not share the Western experience will never resonate as strongly with liberal values. Immigrants, generally speaking, will not be as willing to make sacrifices for the sake of liberal principles.

Some "horizontal transfer"[125] of liberal values is possible in the process of immigrant integration, but as the proportion of those from non-Western backgrounds living in Western society increases, the overall effectiveness of liberal ideology as a means of social cohesion will steadily decline. When immigrant minorities get big enough, they form parallel societies with competing beliefs and values. As more diasporas reach a "critical mass" sufficient to insulate community members against assimilation to the host country values, the difficulty and cost of assimilation programs will only increase.

When it comes to Muslims in particular (the biggest focus of anger for anti-immigrant movements), the continued growth of Muslim communities is an actual economic threat. The stronger Islamic influence becomes, the more men and women will choose to practice traditional gender roles. Even if it comes with a lower material standard of living, Muslims in particular can derive satisfaction and happiness from spiritual and social rather than material means, and as such have a higher tolerance for economic marginalization than more secularized demographics.

When Muslims are only a few percent of the population, this doesn't have a serious effect on the economy, but if immigration continued unchecked, within some decades a number of technology producing countries could have Muslim populations in excess of 20%. If Muslims are using social services and public infrastructure, but their women are not paying taxes or joining the formal labor pool, it puts pressure on government revenue and drives inflation by driving up budget deficits. Muslim households tend to be

[125] The term "horizontal" here refers to values transferring from government, media, colleagues and friends rather than "vertical" transfer from parents to children.

bigger, and to have lower divorce rates. This means that there would be more sharing and less overall consumption, which would also increase inflation by reducing overall consumer demand per capita.

This dynamic helps to explain policies coming into effect across Europe that directly attack Islamic practices that mitigate mixing of men and women, such as bans on veiling in public schools, bans on Islamic face veils in public, and requiring that men shake hands with women to receive citizenship. These policies are modes of horizontally imposing liberal values onto Muslims, which ultimately help to reduce the size of Muslim families and keep family size low and tax revenue and consumption high. Suppressing Islam is not just a matter of aesthetics or liberation ethics for the West — it's a struggle to preserve a mode of economic organization.

There are two possible scenarios in the future — a takeover by anti-immigration, ethno-nationalist parties, or globalist pro-immigration parties retaining power. Both of these trajectories (or some hybrid of the two) lead to serious economic and technological decline. The ethno-nationalist trajectory must either face demographic decline leading to a deflationary spiral, or revive traditional morality which undermines the consumerist production model. The globalist trajectory will face mounting costs of holding together increasingly heterogeneous societies, requiring repressive governance measures that undermine liberal values. This will render Western cultures militarily vulnerable, as it will result in a population composed largely of lower class native population and immigrant population who both feel disenfranchised by the political culture and will therefore lack motivation and internal cohesion in a major war.

The anti-immigration, ethno-nationalist trajectory is much more likely for purely material reasons. For Western states to suppress populist tendencies requires increasingly costly campaigns to suppress domestic right-wing terrorism and conduct propaganda campaigns to counter xenophobic narratives. The nature of the interest-based financial system and increasing costs of natural resources means that government budgets will come under increasing pressure, so there is a strong possibility that suppressing ethno-nationalist, anti-immigration trends may eventually cease to be an option in many countries.

World War III, Religio-Economic Systems, and the Decline of Liberalism

This analysis confirms what should be self-evident — perpetual economic growth is impossible. What goes up must come down. A theology which conflates the created world and the infinite is simply false and will eventually bump up against reality.

This reality check has major implications not only for the West, but also for the West's geopolitical rivals, most notably Russia and China. It is unclear if technological production in Russia and China can truly survive a steep decline of the West; Russian industry depends heavily on Western technology, while China's economy is highly dependent on exports to the West. Any major geopolitical conflict will have serious economic consequences due to de-globalization. If there is a major confrontation between China and the West, they will be fighting for control over a very different and likely much smaller global economy than the pre-war economy.

Since both Western and Chinese economic models depend on high levels of consumption, a major global conflict and associated economic decline will give low consumption models a significant advantage. This could very well lead to a revival of both traditional Christian and Islamic values in the face of erosion of liberal values.

Liberalism is an important tool for projecting Western political influence. This influence is not at all natural, but rather is projected by means of costly initiatives such as aid in the fields of education and economic development. A major conflict would force the West to divert funding away from cultural imperialism in Muslim countries, opening spaces for the revival of Islam as an alternative mode of economic organization. Any revival of Islam will be a major mode to colonial-industrial modes of production which depend partly on access to markets in Muslim-majority countries, as well as preferential access to resources based in Muslim-majority regions.

Currently, feminism is deeply embedded in Western academic and educational institutions. These institutions act as gatekeepers to Western economies, meaning that Western economic power acts as a powerful incentive to undergo feminist indoctrination. The more the West declines

economically, the less incentive there will be to internalize liberal principles, including feminism.

An extended world conflict thus has high potential to revive ethical models of consumption based upon a gendered division of labor, in cultures with both Muslim and Christian heritage. Although these models cannot match raw production, they leverage the innate strengths of men and women collaboratively rather than competitively. Traditional models are also far more efficient than consumerism in terms of consumption efficiency, making them well-suited to weathering a period of extended economic decline.

From this perspective, consumerist economic models appear as extremely wasteful not only in terms of natural resources, but also in their handling of the innate wealth of human biology. By standardizing education for both boys and girls and building an economy based upon large corporations and governmental institutions, many of the economic advantages of gendered and family based labor are lost.

For several centuries, globalization and a colonial world order has shaped Western economic models, and feminism has facilitated and benefited from this process. That trend appears to have reached its peak, in terms of both ecological and social sustainability. As a period of de-globalization sets in, traditional religious ideologies are positioned to regain economic importance, as preservation of families is an effective means of conserving scarce resources by increasing household size and consumption efficiency. In short, the modern, liberal world economic order and feminism rose together, and they will sink together.

Red-pilled Subculture and Toxic Masculinity

External factors like dwindling natural resources and economic crisis are not the only factors driving the decline of feminism; psychological factors play an important role as well. While feminism has certainly helped many women to cope with the trauma of European history and the difficulty of modern economic life, it is also causing a backlash. Male opponents of feminism are increasingly numerous and hostile, most notably the “red pilled” subculture. This movement takes its name from the movie *The Matrix*, in which the red pill

represents a choice to wake up to the reality of an artificial reality meant to enslave humanity. The movement emphasizes male victimization as a result of feminism, citing injustices against men like false rape accusations and unfair outcomes in child custody courts. Proponents of red-pill ideology mainly originate in cultures with strong feminist influence, and some of them promote hatred or abuse of women.

Mainstream journalism, usually produced by feminists or those sympathetic to feminism, generally dismisses red-pilled subculture as irrationally misogynistic. These critiques only aggravate red pillers' feeling that mainstream culture is irreparably contaminated by feminism. In fact, the grievances of red pillers are very real and valid, although their response to these grievances is hardly justifiable.

Just as feminism is a response to the widespread entry of women into the formal labor force, the red pilled subculture is a kind of coping mechanism for a world shaped by feminism. Many followers of the red-pilled subculture focus on having sex with multiple women, with some men calling themselves "pick up artists," meaning that they consider casual sex with multiple women to be a kind of art. To some extent, chronically using women for sex is seen as a way of affirming their masculinity or being an "alpha." The term "alpha" is borrowed from the theory of evolutionary biology, and generally speaking the movement is theologically aligned with atheism and Freudianism.

The movement is also driven in part by environmental factors. A major impulse within the movement seeks to assert masculinity through body building and in some cases testosterone replacement therapy. Red pillers are acutely aware of the global trend of declining testosterone, and having sex with many women and being an "alpha" are a way to counter what they perceive to be a war against masculinity.

The biochemical decline of masculinity has parallels in the decline in men's status that has come with feminism. Feminism has deprived men of the sensation of being "leaders" in families and relationships. Instead they are pressured into egalitarian relationships where women often have equal or greater earning and decision-making power. Red pillers believe that women are attracted to high status men as part of an evolutionary impulse, and thus try to manipulate these instincts in order to fuel their sexual conquests.

It is easy to see why the red pilled subculture is often accused of misogyny. To a large extent, the movement is an expression of male insecurity and fear of betrayal by women. Much of red pill discourse is based on belief in an inherent tendency of women to be unfaithful, or to cheat on their "beta" husbands or boyfriends with "alpha" men. This discourse about women being inherently more prone to infidelity echoes earlier Christian ideas.

Like feminism, the red pill subculture can be seen in some ways as a response to a lack of stability in relationships. Feminism developed partly in response to women seeking economic independence to secure themselves against the risk of being abandoned. Likewise, the red pill movement obsesses about the possibility of women cheating on their husbands or boyfriends. On one hand, red pilled pick up artists gratify themselves sexually by having sex with many women, but on the other hand, they secure themselves against the risk of betrayal by not becoming too strongly attached to any one woman. Fears about unfaithful women are aggravated by feminist narratives that frame promiscuity as "empowerment."

This is rooted in broader cultural trends related to feminism. With the modern increase in women working outside the home, more and more men suffer from abandonment issues due to their mothers pursuing independent careers. Overworked, stressed single mothers sometimes act out their stress by being abusive to their children, causing some men to have general negative feelings toward women. Women may also contract abusive or incompetent babysitters or daycare centers, leading to traumatic experiences for children. Psychologists have long observed that a man's relationship with his mother has a profound impact on his relationship with women throughout his life. If a man feels deep resentment toward his mother, he may act it out by behaving abusively toward other women.

This may be fueling a cultural trend of misogyny, which, in addition to red pill, has given rise to the "incel" subculture. Incel is a composite of "involuntary" and "celibate," describing men who find themselves unable to have sex with women. Some members of this subculture have expressed their anger by deliberately murdering random women simply for being women. A major driver of this rage is anger at women for not having sex with them, which is no doubt aggravated by the presence of many attractive women in both the public sphere and media. Seeing so many beautiful women doubtless

arouses desire in these men, which then translates to anger and frustration when they are unable to fulfill their desires.

More mild forms of expressing anger toward women include playing with women and then breaking all contact with them without any explanation, colloquially known as "ghosting." Another abusive practice known as "stealthing" involves getting a woman to consent to sex with a condom, but then secretly removing the condom before intercourse. In general, red-pillers advocate attitudes of extreme dominance over women, viewing this as an affirmation of masculinity and a triumph against feminism.

Feminists are sometimes pejoratively called "man-haters" by red-pillers, but many red-pilled behaviors and tactics are very effective at turning women into "man-haters," or intensifying their "man-hate." Recalling the importance of female class consciousness in the industrial revolution, the battle between red pillers and feminists can be seen as a form of class struggle. Men come to view women as adversaries and seek their own benefit at the expense of women, and vice versa. Rather than men and women viewing themselves as part of an integrated, unified society, they define themselves according to a schema of "oppressed" and "oppressors." Feminists characterize men as oppressors, while red pillers characterize feminists as oppressors, leading some feminists to view men as adversaries and red pillers to view women as adversaries.

Although red-pilled subculture is defined largely by hatred of feminism, it is a powerful means of feeding and vitalizing feminism. The result of this dynamic is increasing political polarization and a general decline in social cohesion. Feminism is almost universally associated with extreme left-wing politics, while the red pill subculture is strongly correlated to extreme right-wing politics. Gender politics driven by both feminism and the red-pilled subculture thus feed each other, tearing Western society apart in the process.

This animosity between men and women is also fuelling the demographic crisis. Since more and more men identify with right wing politics, and women with left wing politics, political polarization affects the viability and stability of relationships. As time goes on, the proportion of single adults in the West is steadily rising, as are feelings of loneliness. Widespread feelings of loneliness are linked to violence, with loneliness being the main factor shared by mass shooters in the United States.

Liberalism has no ready answer to this vicious cycle, and the burnout resulting from pickup culture and chronically single people is fuelling rising interest in traditional marriages. This trend is growing but still relatively fringe; the entire global economy depends on feminist discourse, so abandoning it means erasing decades of economic growth and technological development.

In the near term, this polarization is likely to continue, with men increasingly shifting to the political right and women to the left. Once this polarization reaches a breaking point, violence will likely break out. The fact that men are over-represented in the military and law enforcement means that violent suppression of left wing political movements is likely to occur at some point. This tension between men and women is yet another factor likely to lead to the decline of liberalism and feminism, as civil wars along political lines will severely disrupt economic and technological production. As this process intensifies, the decline of liberalism and feminism will accelerate, since liberalism and feminism have always depended on consistent economic growth.

The End of Moral Superiority

While political shifts surrounding feminism have major consequences in themselves, the moral repercussions could be even more significant.

Under liberalism, economic growth and moral superiority are two sides of the same coin. Economic performance is linked to political legitimacy, so economic decline guarantees regime change. Because technological development depends on surplus resources, economic decline or stagnation means that society is not fulfilling the grand vision of the theology of progress. If liberalism consistently fails to deliver technological miracles or hope of salvation, people will stop believing in it and start looking for other ideologies.

This has major implications for feminism, since economic growth is one of the major justifications for feminism. If economies with high levels of gender equality stop delivering technological development, it will cast doubt on the necessity of feminism. Currently, much of the world system operates on the idea that the rest of the world can eventually have a standard of living

similar to that of the West, and that working toward gender equality is a core part of achieving that goal. If Western countries can no longer provide a desirable standard of living for their own citizens, then why should other nations try to emulate Western gender roles?

Economic growth, including growth driven by feminism, is a major justification for "soft" methods of neo-colonial control such as NGOs, infrastructure loans, and sanctions as well as "hard" methods of control like coups, proxy wars, and invasions. Western "debt-trap diplomacy" as well as military interventions depend on the premise that more gender equality will result in more economic growth. Populations that willingly accept Western neo-colonial dominance do so in the hopes that they can one day be as affluent as the West.

As it becomes clear that liberal ideas about gender equality ultimately lead to economic decline, subjects of the neo-colonial order will have nothing to hope for from subordinating themselves to Western hegemony, and resistance to neo-colonial methods will increase. This will accelerate the West's decline, because the West is highly dependent on the rest of the world purchasing Western products, including infrastructure, consulting services, technology and education. This desire to emulate the West depends on people feeling a sense of inferiority, and presenting gender equality as a metric of superiority is an effective way of making people feel inferior or backward. Once gender equality no longer corresponds to economic dominance, however, this type of shaming will lose its effectiveness. The loss of moral superiority and loss of economic superiority will thus feed each other in a compounding cycle.

The modern world system was built on the premise of the superiority of Christianity. When traditional Christianity proved to have limitations in justifying moral superiority, the West abandoned it in favor of liberalism and scientism. Feminism and gender equality were a necessary part of this shift. This raises the question; when science, technology, and gender equality are no longer effective for claiming moral superiority, what will replace them? Environmentalism is a major contender; it too can be used to make poorer populations feel inferior and force them to buy Western products and university degrees. European politics and left wing political parties

throughout the West have been shifting toward moral hierarchies based on issues like global warming and carbon emissions for decades.

Environmentalism has two serious weaknesses, however, when it comes to constructing hierarchies of moral superiority. Firstly, technological approaches to environmentalism rely heavily on environmentally destructive methods to produce renewable energy technologies like wind, solar, and hydroelectric power. Aside from the hypocrisy this entails, it also means that technological environmentalism is unlikely to survive a serious technological decline. Secondly, traditional lifestyles are already far more environmentally friendly than technological environmentalism, so environmentalist rhetoric can easily end up supporting traditionalists.

In the West, the likely outcome of the decline of the moral hierarchy of liberalism is a revival of Christianity, not only as a personal spiritual practice, but also as a form of political and economic organization. Although the scriptural basis for Christian governmental principles is vague, it is much better suited to a period of war, de-globalization, and economic decline than liberalism. Christianity first emerged as a political force during the decline of the Roman empire, and thrived partly because it was well suited to the economic challenges of a declining empire. Fasting and asceticism, aside from their spiritual value, have real material utility for conserving scarce resources. Conversely, Europe's revival of Greco-Roman ideas and the turn toward liberalism occurred during a period of economic growth.

Russia's new governing ideology mirrors this ascent to some extent. Russia has recovered from the collapse of communism partly by reframing itself as the protector of the Orthodox Church. Although this shift is mainly symbolic, it does illustrate how historically Christian nations can turn back to Christianity in response to the failure of a more secular ideology.

Christian revival will almost certainly lead to a major decline not only in the prominence of liberalism and feminism, but in Western hegemony in general. Although liberalism has strong Christian roots, secularism camouflages this history, giving it a kind of universal appeal. A revival of traditional Christianity would likely weaken Western neo-imperial influence, particularly among Muslims. This is one more factor that will likely fuel an economic and technological decline.

There is no reason to believe that liberal empire will escape the fate of every empire before it. Every empire before it has fallen; centralization gives way to decentralization, order to chaos, and organizational complexity to more basic forms of organization. Hopes that this time will be different are grounded only in faith, and this faith is ultimately rooted in interpretations of Christian scripture which for most of Christian history were regarded as heretical, such as the idea that divine will could emanate from humans pursuing their rational self-interest and millenarian hopes of material abundance.

This faith is clearly misplaced; all evidence points to the limitations of the human intellect and the resources of the universe. Modern scientific theories agree on an eventual entropic "heat death of the universe," so both logic and revelation point to the conclusion that the material world is finite. This clear and apparent reality clashes with ideas about an eternal and all powerful God appearing in the form of a human man, as well as the human intellect being able to manifest the divine will.

Western civilization never stopped having faith. Rather, its faith shifted from God personified in Jesus to an immanent God present within human beings and nature. And so the West seeks salvation and eternal life not from a transcendent Creator, but from stars, asteroids, and human beings.

Utopian visions of eliminating all war, famine, and disease, embodied in policies of the United Nations and many of its member states, are unattainable fantasies and delusions. There will be no earthly paradise as some influential strains of Christian millenarianism argue. In fact, these misguided visions are leading humanity toward more severe plagues, famines, and wars as a result of the mad drive for economic growth driven by excessive consumption. Even if the failure of liberalism drives a Christian, the failure of liberalism is rooted in Christianity.

If liberalism and feminism are driving the decline of the West, and Christianity is at the root of the problem, what alternatives are there? If humanity should not be oriented toward the pursuit of a utopian millenarian vision, what purpose or goal should define the structure of our societies and our lives?

Chapter 11

Islam

Looking at the bleak future of feminism and the West brings us back to the original point of departure for this whole story. Why do men and women pray separately in mosques? In other words; what is the benefit of gender segregation, both in physical spaces and the respective roles of men and women?

Considering the history of liberalism and feminism from theological, social, economic, and political perspectives, it is very clear that regimes of gender relations have effects far beyond liberalism's myopic focus on individual rights and freedom. Gender roles are in fact inseparable from political and economic interests. The entire hierarchy of Western civilization rests upon modern norms of gender relations, and this hierarchy is the engine which powers the entire world system.

Though this dynamic may seem complex, it is elucidated in simple and clear Quranic ayat:

ٱلشَّيۡطَٰنُ يَعِدُكُمُ ٱلۡفَقۡرَ وَيَأۡمُرُكُم بِٱلۡفَحۡشَآءِۖ وَٱللَّهُ يَعِدُكُم مَّغۡفِرَةٗ
مِّنۡهُ وَفَضۡلٗاۗ وَٱللَّهُ وَٰسِعٌ عَلِيمٞ

> Satan threatens you with poverty and orders you to immorality, while Allah promises you forgiveness from Him and bounty. And Allah is all-Encompassing and Knowing.[126]

It was the promise of wealth that convinced Western civilization to abandon traditional morality, including standards of modesty in interactions between

[126] Surah Baqarah, 268

men and women, and it is the desire for wealth that facilitates the spread of the modern Western social norms around the world.

Through neo-colonial wealth flows, neo-colonial power centers are able to replace families with large, centralized institutions based upon the logic of gender equality. By means of these institutions, they can better organize violence and resource extraction, generating extravagantly wasteful lifestyles. The essentially diabolical nature of this process is further confirmed by the Holy Quran:

إِنَّ ٱلْمُبَذِّرِينَ كَانُوٓا۟ إِخْوَٰنَ ٱلشَّيَٰطِينِ ۖ وَكَانَ ٱلشَّيْطَٰنُ لِرَبِّهِۦ كَفُورًا

> Indeed, the wasteful are brothers of the devils, and ever has Satan been to his Lord ungrateful.[127]

These wasteful lifestyles are held up as the standard of success, and then used to claim superiority over the rest of the world. The rest of the world attempting to emulate these modes of political and economic organization (including by means of gender equality) ensures the maintenance of neo-colonial wealth flows.

This is also consistent with the *modus operandi* of demonic forces; the devil is characterized as a deceiver:

يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلنَّاسُ إِنَّ وَعْدَ ٱللَّهِ حَقٌّ ۖ فَلَا تَغُرَّنَّكُمُ ٱلْحَيَوٰةُ ٱلدُّنْيَا وَلَا يَغُرَّنَّكُم بِٱللَّهِ ٱلْغَرُورُ

[127] Surah al-Isra, 27

> O mankind, indeed the promise of Allah is truth, so let not the worldly life delude you and be not deceived about Allah by the Deceiver.[128]

Those who live simple but dignified lives with all of their needs fulfilled are characterized as impoverished and inferior because they do not have access to the luxuries and accessories of the neo-colonial power centers. They are then taught that the only way to escape this condition of supposed inferiority is to abandon traditional family structures and standards of modesty in favor of modern states and corporations.

Exploiting the "other," in the form of both non-European populations and women, enabled the industrial revolution, the rise of the modern state, and the global financial and monetary system. A culture of mass consumption powered by commercializing lust and immodesty then supercharged these institutions. In keeping with the general theme of deception, feminist discourse frames the commodification of women, which is really a form of exploitation, as liberation and empowerment. Women are likewise menaced with poverty if they do not consent to monetizing their beauty and sexuality in the labor market.

Although this system depends on many elements, the monetization of women, their bodies, and sexualized interactions is an important economic power base for the institutions of modernity in terms of labor, taxation, and for generating demand for central bank currencies. Demonetization of women and their bodies is thus an existential threat to the system. Alternate modes of gender relations that reduce the monetization of women and their beauty diminish the power of all of the beneficiaries of this system and undermine the hierarchy underlying it. This hierarchy elevates not only individual politicians, businessmen, professors, and scientists, but nations, nationalities, races and ethnicities as well.

If women begin to exit the public sphere in large numbers, taking economic power with them and returning it to the private (or domestic) sphere, it truly does threaten the dominant power structures. In this situation, it is possible to see the eternal relevance of the scriptural narratives of the

---

[128] Surah Fatir, 5

interactions between Pharaoh and Moses. The story is a parable for the basic dynamic of human beings achieving worldly power by usurping God's authority. Pharaoh rejected the truth of Moses' message because it would mean admitting that his claim to divinity was false, which would mean humbling himself and acknowledging the greatness of God. This acknowledgment would surely reduce his power and authority, but this power and authority was unjustly obtained not only by false theological claims, but also by slaughtering innocents without right and creating divisions among the people.

There are analogues to all of this in the configuration of the modern world order. Western hegemony began as an ethnic supremacist ideology, inspired by the image of an ethnically European God. Europeans spread this image of God around the world and sought to make the rest of the world worship it, often by means of slaughter. The world was then carved up into factions by means of artificial borders, which were then used to further exalt Western culture and claim superiority.

Modern institutions grew out of breaking down kinship networks and replacing them with man-made institutions, or in other words replacing the divine order with the human made order. Since this generated short-term economic growth, a theology which understood economic growth as God's will claims that the new institutional order represents progress.

The revealed wisdom of the Quran explicitly links the act of breaking down families and ties of kinship to spreading corruption on the earth, and warns that this will be the result of rejecting the wisdom of revelation:

فَهَلْ عَسَيْتُمْ إِن تَوَلَّيْتُمْ أَن تُفْسِدُوا۟ فِى ٱلْأَرْضِ وَتُقَطِّعُوٓا۟ أَرْحَامَكُمْ

> So would you perhaps, if you turned away, cause corruption on earth and sever your [ties of] relationship?[129]

Divine revelation also informs humanity that there are among us those who view this corruption to be an improvement:

[129] Surah Muhammed, 22

وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمْ لَا تُفْسِدُوا۟ فِى ٱلْأَرْضِ قَالُوٓا۟ إِنَّمَا نَحْنُ مُصْلِحُونَ

> And when it is said to them, "Do not cause corruption on the earth," they say, "We are but reformers."[130]

Feminism, like Church doctrine in the Western Roman empire before it, has been instrumental in breaking down kinship networks and replacing them with modern institutions, and these institutions have been key to amassing the wealth that underpins Western hegemony. If the elite of the modern world hierarchy admit that this is in fact corruption and against God's will, it means that they must relinquish some of their ill-gotten worldly power and status. This would mean a decline in the status not only of Western nations, but of European ethnicities in general.

Technological development and science have long been held up as evidence of European superiority. Although it has become unfashionable to refer to non-Europeans as "uncivilized," "barbarians" and "savages," the same sentiment persists in discourse about "developed" and "undeveloped" countries. As long as liberalism continues to deliver economic growth and technological development, it can be held up as evidence of European ethnic superiority. If the global project of liberalism fails, however, ethnic exultation can quickly turn to humiliation as the side effects of modern production run out of control.

If we realize that the world order shaped by liberalism 1) is actually corrupting the earth in order to chase an illusion, and that this illusion of "progress" depends on breaking down families, then it becomes apparent that social rules that preserve the integrity of families in reality protect us against corruption. Whatever the intentions of feminist authors, the mission to make women independent of men and abolish patriarchy has resulted in continued breakdown of families by framing promiscuity as liberation, exalting wage slavery as independence, and maligning patriarchal marriage as oppression.

---

[130] Surah Baqarah, 11

Breaking down norms of gender segregation was essential for colonialism, industrialization, the expansion of the modern state, and remains essential for the financial sector, fiat currency, consumerism, and neo-colonialism. Colonialism depended on mass production, which required replacing traditional family-based production with mass production via industrialization. The modern state depended on bringing female labor into taxation. Fiat currency and the financial sector depend on driving mass consumption by leveraging female beauty and sexuality as a commodity. Neo-colonialism depends on holding up gender equality as an ideal of progress in order to instill inferiority complexes in formerly colonized peoples.

None of these key building blocks of the world system will function correctly in a world where gender segregation is minimized and the integrity of families is maximized. Industrialization would have been impossible without normalizing large numbers of men and women interacting with each other in the workplace. Colonialism would have been impossible without industrialization. The modern state could never have developed without monetizing and taxing women's labor. Fiat currency and the financial sector could never have reached their current levels of power without consumerism driven by sexualization of consumption. And the West could not engender neo-colonial dependence around the world if it could not convince the rest of humanity of their inferiority by means of science, technology, and gender equality paid for by means of all of the above.

Herein lies the answer to the question, "Why does Western culture mandate mixing of men and women?" While the entire system revolves around material interests, it is in fact a Satanic theology. The earlier stages of this theology developed by means of deification of the human intellect, and the later stages developed by attempting to make men and women equal. Enshrining economic growth as the central purpose of human existence is in fact deification of human desire, which is also clarified in the revelation of the Quran:

أَرَءَيۡتَ مَنِ ٱتَّخَذَ إِلَٰهَهُۥ هَوَىٰهُ أَفَأَنتَ تَكُونُ عَلَيۡهِ وَكِيلًا

> Have you seen the one who takes as his god his own desire? Then would you be responsible for him?[131]

Human desire is insatiable, and power is the means of fulfilling desire. The core logic of all modern institutions is the amplification and centralization of power. The Church in Western Europe began this process by seeking to augment the power of the Church at the expense of families, and after secularization the state took over the process of centralizing power. Mass media harnessed the power of sexuality to further channel desire toward centralization of power.

What is the endgame of all of this concentration of power? Although the justification has changed over the centuries, the basic process remained the same. The Church saw the bishops, including the pope, as the inheritors of the authority of Jesus, and thus the rightful heirs of divine authority. The Protestants challenged this interpretation, but maintained the idea of humans possessing divine authority under "the priesthood of all believers." With liberalism, human desire became the source of governmental legitimacy.

Whether power is concentrated in the hands of Church or state, there is a consistent principle in Christianity to emulate Christ. In his *Letter to the Ephesians,* Ignatius of Antioch calls for imitating Christ, who he frames as God Himself:

> "Let us be imitators of the Lord, and strive to be found in the number of those who give thanks to Him, even in suffering, as He did for us."

A deep conscious and subconscious imperative to imitate Jesus, conceived as God incarnate in human form, can easily instill a human with desire to attain divine attributes such as omnipotence and omniscience. This internal drive is key to understanding the insatiable drive for power seen in the Church and in its institutional heirs within Western civilization.

In essence, the entire drive to amass power is driven by rebellion against God. The parable of the Adam and Eve describes this fundamental character of human existence:

---

[131] Surah Furqan, 43

فَوَسْوَسَ لَهُمَا ٱلشَّيْطَٰنُ لِيُبْدِيَ لَهُمَا مَا وُۥرِيَ عَنْهُمَا مِن سَوْءَٰتِهِمَا وَقَالَ مَا نَهَىٰكُمَا رَبُّكُمَا عَنْ هَٰذِهِ ٱلشَّجَرَةِ إِلَّآ أَن تَكُونَا مَلَكَيْنِ أَوْ تَكُونَا مِنَ ٱلْخَٰلِدِينَ

> But Satan whispered to them to make apparent to them that which was concealed from them of their private parts. He said, "Your Lord did not forbid you this tree except that you become angels or become of the immortal."[132]

This original act of rebellion was motivated by the desire to attain attributes of divinity, and this act of rebellion is linked to uncovering and nakedness. In his tafsir, Imam Tabari, *rahimullah*, explains that Adam and Eve wore garments of light in paradise which disappeared when they committed this act of rebellion. Likewise, in the modern world order, attempting to rival or usurp divine power has become strongly linked to nakedness — nudity stimulates consumer economies and enthralls subjects of the state in order to make them willing participants in the mission of amassing power.

The desire to attain immortality is a fundamental act of rebellion, since humans were created to be mortal and finite, and only God is eternal. The human image of God is in large part to blame for this — God is perfect, while humans are not. Conceiving of God as a human being thus implants the idea of an imperfect, fallible God, which leads to the idea that the creation (including humanity) can be improved upon and perfected. This eventually manifests as a war against nature, where natural ecosystems including forests and oceans, as well as biological gender roles, are destroyed in the process of seeking to improve the created world.

The core logic of this system is a belief that if humans gain enough power and knowledge, that they will be able to correct the iniquities of nature;

---

[132] Surah al A'raf, 20

including patriarchy and the unfair hand dealt to women by nature. This contradicts the belief that there is already a perfectly wise, omnipotent, and omniscient Creator that established the order of things, and that existing in harmony with this order is conducive to our best interests. For reasons beyond the scope of this book, this problem is related to a large extent to Western Christianity, and even today principles of liberalism and feminism do not affect Eastern Orthodox and Coptic branches of Christianity to the same extent. Nonetheless, there is still a high degree of unity among Christendom, and Orthodox and Coptic Christians while retaining more traditional values than the liberal West are still affected by the same problems by means of their broader ties with Christian civilization.

The basic problem is one of accepting human nature — human beings are weak, and we are in need of God's help and mercy. We have no hope of becoming godlike, and such aspirations lead to destruction, as exemplified by the story of Pharaoh and Moses. Modern crises, including environmental destruction, wars, epidemics of loneliness, depression, and broken families, and other modern maladies are ultimately rooted in this impossible quest for perfection. Elevating women to the level of men by making them more masculine is part of the quest for apotheosis — the desire to become god-like. The breakdown of the family is part of this same process, as it liberates men from dependence on women and women from dependence on men, since self-sufficiency is an attribute of God.

Islam has emerged as the main rival to liberalism as a civilizational ordering principle. Despite decades of attempts by the liberal world order to suppress and corrupt Islam, and despite vast resources and advanced military technology, the West has failed to crush Islamic resistance. The centrality of ties of kinship are apparent here — it is in regions with the strongest tribal and family structures like Afghanistan, the Sahel, Somalia, and Yemen that have most frustrated liberalism's imperial ambitions.

There is a fundamental divergence between the objectives of Islam and liberalism. This is the root of the incompatibility of their respective conception of gender roles. In conceptually mixing the divine and the material world, liberalism is trapped in a futile cycle of trying to remake the material world in the image of the divine in order to achieve apotheosis. Islam, by contrast, literally means submitting to the divine decree rather than trying to

change or improve it. While Islam may mandate material improvement, the Islamic worldview is holistic and weighs economic growth and technological development against potential harms and side effects.

This causes believers in the theology of progress to malign traditional Islam as an impediment to "progress," or as retrograde, but the reality is that such critics are afflicted by an extremely short-term perspective. This is because it is an ideology conceived by human minds. Islam, by contrast, has strong protections against any attempts to supplant or modify revelation, meaning that it is a more authentic embodiment of a perspective that encompasses the entirety of history, from the beginning of creation to the Final Judgment.

The end goal of liberalism is to elevate human beings to the level of God, while the end goal of Islam is to perfect humanity's subservience to God. It is clear that there can be no coexistence of two such ideologies, and it is also clear that genuine implementation of Islamic principles will position Islam as a defender of the natural balance of the created, natural world — including the biological and psychological basis of gender and its social expression.

On the most fundamental level, this is why Islam mandates gender segregation and liberalism mandates gender mixing. All of the trappings of modern culture — the obsession with freedom and economic growth, the frantic pace of consumption, and the crass commercialization of sexuality — can be traced back to the breakdown of the theological division between man and God; the same basic dynamic described in humanity's expulsion from the Garden of Paradise. This theological drive gave rise to the material interests of liberal values and institutions which relentlessly seek to push "gender equality" onto Muslims and the world.

While most of this book discusses the role of Christian principles in shaping the contours of Western history, values, and socio-economic models, this chapter considers Islam as an alternative. To put it simply, while the rest of this book looks at how Western civilization went wrong, this chapter considers how Islam could have prevented the West from falling into Satanic deceptions, and how it offers a way out of the various crises of modernity

Religious Principles as Parameters for Constructing Societies

Any structure composed of parts requires some form of bonding. A wooden house is held together with nails, a brick house with mortar, and a concrete structure with structural steel and cement. Positive and negative charge holds molecules together. When it comes to social structures and institutions, love is the bond that holds them together.

Strong sexual or romantic attraction between a man and woman is sometimes called "chemistry," which alludes to chemical bonding. When certain molecules or atoms come together, they fuse into a new structure with different properties than its constituent parts. Deliberately bringing specific molecules together under the right conditions is the essence of chemical engineering, or manufacturing compounds with desirable properties. Regulation on social bonding and marriage has a number of analogues to chemical engineering. Relationships between individuals may lead to formation of bonds which have either beneficial or harmful effects. To ensure the formation of beneficial bonds and to prevent the formation of harmful ones, it is necessary to add some elements while excluding others.

In this metaphor, the drive for women to be independent of men acts as a kind of solvent for degrading traditional family and community structures. In chemical engineering, breaking down the bonds of existing structures frees up atoms and molecules which can then be used to construct new structures. Early Church regulations broke down extended tribal family structures, enclosure and industrialization dissolved traditional communities, and feminism, along with male irresponsibility and abandoning traditional moral rules, dissolved nuclear families. The individuals extracted through this process then became the building blocks of modern taxation, industrial economies powered by consumerism, and fiat currency.

Islamic legislation is resistant to this process for a number of reasons. First, gender relations are clearly defined in a number of unambiguous verses.

حُرِّمَتْ عَلَيْكُمْ أُمَّهَٰتُكُمْ وَبَنَاتُكُمْ وَأَخَوَٰتُكُمْ وَعَمَّٰتُكُمْ وَخَٰلَٰتُكُمْ وَبَنَاتُ ٱلْأَخِ
وَبَنَاتُ ٱلْأُخْتِ وَأُمَّهَٰتُكُمُ ٱلَّٰتِيٓ أَرْضَعْنَكُمْ وَأَخَوَٰتُكُم مِّنَ ٱلرَّضَٰعَةِ وَأُمَّهَٰتُ
نِسَآئِكُمْ وَرَبَٰٓئِبُكُمُ ٱلَّٰتِي فِي حُجُورِكُم مِّن نِّسَآئِكُمُ ٱلَّٰتِي دَخَلْتُم بِهِنَّ فَإِن لَّمْ
تَكُونُوا۟ دَخَلْتُم بِهِنَّ فَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْكُمْ وَحَلَٰٓئِلُ أَبْنَآئِكُمُ ٱلَّذِينَ مِنْ أَصْلَٰبِكُمْ
وَأَن تَجْمَعُوا۟ بَيْنَ ٱلْأُخْتَيْنِ إِلَّا مَا قَدْ سَلَفَ إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ كَانَ غَفُورًا رَّحِيمًا

> Prohibited to you [for marriage] are your mothers, your daughters, your sisters, your father's sisters, your mother's sisters, your brother's daughters, your sister's daughters, your [milk] mothers who nursed you, your sisters through nursing, your wives' mothers, and your step-daughters under your guardianship [born] of your wives unto whom you have gone in. But if you have not gone in unto them, there is no sin upon you. And [also prohibited are] the wives of your sons who are from your [own] loins, and that you take [in marriage] two sisters simultaneously, except for what has already occurred. Indeed, Allah is ever Forgiving and Merciful.[133]

This clearly defines who is marriageable and who is not. The medieval Church's program to break down extended families would have been impossible with this kind of clear divine mandate, since it relied extensively on banning marriage to many of those that fall under the marriageable category in the Islamic framework.

Furthermore, a number of verses mandate standards of modesty for both men and women.

---

[133] Surah al Nisa, 23

وَقُل لِّلْمُؤْمِنَٰتِ يَغْضُضْنَ مِنْ أَبْصَٰرِهِنَّ وَيَحْفَظْنَ فُرُوجَهُنَّ وَلَا
يُبْدِينَ زِينَتَهُنَّ إِلَّا مَا ظَهَرَ مِنْهَا وَلْيَضْرِبْنَ بِخُمُرِهِنَّ عَلَىٰ جُيُوبِهِنَّ وَلَا
يُبْدِينَ زِينَتَهُنَّ إِلَّا لِبُعُولَتِهِنَّ أَوْ ءَابَآئِهِنَّ أَوْ ءَابَآءِ بُعُولَتِهِنَّ أَوْ أَبْنَآئِهِنَّ
أَوْ أَبْنَآءِ بُعُولَتِهِنَّ أَوْ إِخْوَٰنِهِنَّ أَوْ بَنِىٓ إِخْوَٰنِهِنَّ أَوْ بَنِىٓ أَخَوَٰتِهِنَّ أَوْ
نِسَآئِهِنَّ أَوْ مَا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَٰنُهُنَّ أَوِ ٱلتَّٰبِعِينَ غَيْرِ أُو۟لِى ٱلْإِرْبَةِ مِنَ
ٱلرِّجَالِ أَوِ ٱلطِّفْلِ ٱلَّذِينَ لَمْ يَظْهَرُوا۟ عَلَىٰ عَوْرَٰتِ ٱلنِّسَآءِ وَلَا
يَضْرِبْنَ بِأَرْجُلِهِنَّ لِيُعْلَمَ مَا يُخْفِينَ مِن زِينَتِهِنَّ وَتُوبُوٓا۟ إِلَى ٱللَّهِ جَمِيعًا
أَيُّهَ ٱلْمُؤْمِنُونَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ

And tell the believing women to reduce [some] of their vision and guard their private parts and not expose their adornment except that which [necessarily] appears thereof and to wrap [a portion of] their headcovers over their chests and not expose their adornment except to their husbands, their fathers, their husbands' fathers, their sons, their husbands' sons, their brothers, their brothers' sons, their sisters' sons, their women, that which their right hands possess, or those male attendants having no physical desire, or children who are not yet aware of the private aspects of women. And let them not stamp their feet to make known what they conceal of their adornment. And turn to Allah in repentance, all of you, O believers, that you might succeed.[134]

[134] Surah al Nur, 31

While early Christians practiced similar standards of modesty, this command is much more explicit than anything contained in Christian scripture. Such standards cut off the possibility of a culture of mass consumption driven by lust; the basic act of a woman revealing her beauty to those outside her circle of close relatives is clearly prohibited, such that it would be impossible to institutionalize sexualized interactions as a means of boosting economic growth.

Although Christendom practiced gender segregation and veiling for women in public for many centuries, later Christians eventually reinterpreted these rules. Islam is much more resistant to reinterpretation of moral rules than Christianity, however, because of a number of important doctrines.

مَّا كَانَ مُحَمَّدٌ أَبَآ أَحَدٍ مِّن رِّجَالِكُمْ وَلَٰكِن رَّسُولَ ٱللَّهِ وَخَاتَمَ ٱلنَّبِيِّـۧنَ
وَكَانَ ٱللَّهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٍ

> Muhammad is not the father of [any] one of your men, but [he is] the Messenger of Allah and last of the prophets. And ever is Allah, of all things, Knowing.[135]

This verse, supported by numerous authenticated narrations from the life of the Prophet ﷺ, establishes the finality of the revelation of Islam. The completeness of revelation was also emphasized near the end of the life of Prophetﷺ:

ٱلْيَوْمَ أَكْمَلْتُ لَكُمْ دِينَكُمْ وَأَتْمَمْتُ عَلَيْكُمْ نِعْمَتِي وَرَضِيتُ لَكُمُ
ٱلْإِسْلَٰمَ دِينًا

[135] Surah al Ahzab, 40

> This day I have perfected for you your religion and completed My favor upon you and have approved for you Islam as religion.[136]

This contrasts starkly with Christian doctrines about immanence and continuing revelation. Christian scriptural narratives clearly describe Jesus telling his disciples about a *parakletos*, or advocate, who would come in the future as a guide to the believers. John 16:7-8 describes Jesus saying to his followers:

> "Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Paraclete will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you. And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment."

The phrase "convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment" reads as a clear reference to a code of conduct, which would seem to imply future clarification of divine law. Christians traditionally interpreted this as a reference to the Holy Spirit, which they identify as one part of the trinity. They believe the fulfillment of this prophecy was in the pentecost, an event where early Christians were reportedly inspired to speak different languages in order to spread the gospel. This doctrine later formed the basis for the doctrine that any believer could be a vehicle for communicating divine will.

There are a few problems with the Christian narrative. Parts of the description of the *parakletos* do not match the description of the events of the pentecost. Most notably, John 16:12-15 has Jesus describing the *parakletos* (translated here as the "spirit of truth" as follows

> I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come.

[136] Surah Ma'idah, 3

According to the Christian interpretation, the "Spirit of Truth" is God; one third of the trinity, along with the father and the son. If the Holy Spirit is God himself, then how is he not speaking on "his own authority?" What higher authority is there? This passage also refers to a singular male (he) who will speak whatever he hears. If this "he" refers to the Holy Spirit (God HImself, according to the Christian interpretation), then where is he hearing it from?

Muslim scholars argue that this passage refers to the Prophet Muhammed ﷺ, and indeed, Islamic narratives describe him conveying the Word of God, but rather speaking what he heard from the Archangel Gabriel, who is understood as the Holy Spirit in the Islamic tradition. This is also more fitting with the prophecy that he will "convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment," since Islam is a very explicit code of law and morality. By contrast, early Christian narratives about inspiration by the Holy Spirit do not mention anything resembling a code of law.

Early Christians did not actually agree upon the idea that the Holy Spirit was God. Like the idea that Jesus was God incarnate, the doctrine of the divinity of the Holy Spirit was only formalized several centuries after the events of the New Testament, with a number of sects vehemently contesting it. Christian doctrine also established the idea that the Holy Spirit could inspire the clergy, effectively making the priesthood representatives of God on earth.

The combination of these doctrines effectively invested the clergy with divine authority, eventually culminating in the doctrine of papal infallibility. The authority of the clergy in turn legitimated the European aristocracy, leading to many abuses of power which motivated the Reformation and the eventual rise of liberalism. The Reformation and liberalism did nothing to challenge the fundamental idea of divine authority manifesting within humans; it only universalized that authority to all of humanity.

The idea of the divine manifesting through the human results in a much more flexible approach to scriptural exegesis. In effect, it makes it possible to elevate reason toward the level of revelation to an extent impossible in Islam, allowing for the kind of radical reinterpretations that eventually eroded traditional Christian morality.

It was this breakdown of morality that ultimately enabled the emergence of modern political and economic systems. This is not a contentious hypothesis; one of the most common critiques of Islam by modern thinkers within the Western tradition is that it is an impediment to "progress." Indeed, maintaining traditional gender roles and gender segregation acts impedes the expansion of industry, modern government, and finance, making modern economies practically impossible. Secularist movements in the Islamic world, such as Kemalism in Turkey, were very correct in their assessment that Islam (and Islamic gender roles in particular) was holding them back from entering fully into modernity.

There is a fundamental tension between families and modern institutions. Families can grow only through birth and marriage. The health and vitality of a family, then, depends on a social environment conducive to healthy marital bonding and fertility. Optimal marital bonding and household health depends on stability of relationships. Limiting interactions between men and women outside of family contexts strengthens bonding within the marital relationship.

The more interactions men and women have with attractive individuals of the opposite sex, the more likely they are to become dissatisfied with their relationship and pursue someone else. Modern studies into the causes of divorce find that extramarital relationships are a leading cause of divorce.[137] Preventing mixing of genders effectively closes the door to extramarital relationships.

Another one of the biggest reasons of divorce cited in modern studies is lack of family support. [138] This means that as families become smaller, family stability decreases. Extended families can support marriages in a number of ways, including assisting in the matchmaking process, helping with childcare, and supporting dispute resolution. This is not to idealize the role of extended families — in-laws can also cause a lot of damage to a marriage. Nonetheless, marriages with more family support, on average, tend to last longer than those with less.

---

[137] Shelby Scott, et al., "Reasons for Divorce and Recollections of Premarital Intervention: Implications for Improving Relationship Education"
[138] ibid.

This is not a matter of placing collective interests above individuals; stable families are more conducive to individual happiness. Children who grow up in stable family environments are less likely to suffer from depression and anxiety, and research indicates that women tend to enjoy sex more in the context of stable relationships. It's strange, then, that an ideology that undermines relationship stability would claim to be in the interest of women.

It makes sense, however, if we view the matter from the perspective of modern institutions. Corporations thrive on workaholics who have little or no connection with their families. For modern states, tribes and kinship networks can easily become an impediment when it comes to constructing national identity. Large, tight-knit kinship networks and families also reduce dependence on financing and insurance by supporting each other by sharing cars, helping newly weds establish a household, or covering the costs of major accidents. Islamic societies with high levels of family cohesion such as those in Yemen, Somalia, and Afghanistan have some of the worst track records when it comes to attempting to build modern institutions. Secular education, state bureaucracies, and financial institutions are often barely functional or non-existent in those areas with the strongest tribal and extended family structures.

It is true that society based upon strong extended family structures cannot reach the same level of production as a modern society composed of large corporations and government bureaucracies powered by debt-based financing. However, if we take into account the social and environmental toll of this mode of economic organization as well as its ultimate unsustainability, then traditional morality is a protective factor rather than a deficit. It is only from the perspective of the theology of progress that preserving the integrity of kinship networks and marriages appears as an impediment to achieving an imagined utopian future.

Both modern and Islamic ideals of social development are rooted in ideas about worship, but Western civilization, in keeping with the legacy of a human image of God, has enshrined service to mankind as the highest ideal. As belief in the afterlife weakened, hope for an earthly paradise took its place, supported by millenarian interpretations revived by the Reformation. This theological impulse contributed to the modern obsession with constant economic growth and technological development, and has devastating

consequences for human beings and earth. In seeking to eliminate all suffering, Western civilization is actually generating more suffering.

Mental illness and crime resulting from broken families are exemplary of this suffering. Environmental contamination, destruction of natural habitats, and displacement of indigenous peoples and communities are further casualties in the quest for progress. The incredible levels of death and misery generated by colonialism also testify to the iniquity of this ideology.

While unpleasant, this mass violence and destruction can be justified by the dream of a future utopia under the motto that "the ends justify the means." It may be that Western civilization and its modes of economic organization are causing vast suffering, but it is all part of the mission to end suffering. This mission also relates to post-Protestant theology.

Catholicism emphasized imitating Christ's supposed suffering on the cross as a means of purification. It also held monasticism and celibacy in high esteem. Luther's concept of *Sola Fide*, or salvation by faith alone, overturned this ideology. It argued that since Jesus had died for humanity's sins, there was no need for physical penitence and suffering to achieve salvation. This was the starting point for what eventually became the modern liberal mission to eliminate all hunger, disease, and war.

Much of post-Reformation European history, including the revival of hedonism and the "sexual revolution," can be seen as a backlash against the excessive asceticism of early Christianity and the hypocrisy that it eventually spawned. Initially, monks and priests denied themselves sexual partnerships with women and lived in extreme poverty. As corruption in the Church increased, the clergy increasingly indulged in sensual pleasures by embezzling the wealth of common people and then commanding them to be patient with suffering and poverty.

Islam unequivocally proscribes this kind of excessive asceticism. In the Holy Quran, God states that Christian monasticism was not divinely inspired.

وَرَهْبَانِيَّةً ٱبْتَدَعُوهَا مَا كَتَبْنَٰهَا عَلَيْهِمْ إِلَّا ٱبْتِغَآءَ رِضْوَٰنِ ٱللَّهِ فَمَا رَعَوْهَا حَقَّ رِعَايَتِهَا

...and monasticism, which they innovated; We did not prescribe it for them except [that they did so] seeking the approval of Allah. But they did not observe it with due observance.[139]

An authentic narration from the Prophet Muhammed ﷺ contains further condemnation of excessive asceticism:

جَاءَ ثَلاَثَةُ رَهْطٍ إِلَى بُيُوتِ أَزْوَاجِ النَّبِيِّ صلى الله عليه وسلم يَسْأَلُونَ عَنْ عِبَادَةِ النَّبِيِّ صلى الله عليه وسلم فَلَمَّا أُخْبِرُوا كَأَنَّهُمْ تَقَالُّوهَا فَقَالُوا وَأَيْنَ نَحْنُ مِنَ النَّبِيِّ صلى الله عليه وسلم قَدْ غُفِرَ لَهُ مَا تَقَدَّمَ مِنْ ذَنْبِهِ وَمَا تَأَخَّرَ. قَالَ أَحَدُهُمْ أَمَّا أَنَا فَإِنِّي أُصَلِّي اللَّيْلَ أَبَدًا. وَقَالَ آخَرُ أَنَا أَصُومُ الدَّهْرَ وَلاَ أُفْطِرُ. وَقَالَ آخَرُ أَنَا أَعْتَزِلُ النِّسَاءَ فَلاَ أَتَزَوَّجُ أَبَدًا. فَجَاءَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم فَقَالَ " أَنْتُمُ الَّذِينَ قُلْتُمْ كَذَا وَكَذَا أَمَا وَاللَّهِ إِنِّي لأَخْشَاكُمْ لِلَّهِ وَأَتْقَاكُمْ لَهُ، لَكِنِّي أَصُومُ وَأُفْطِرُ، وَأُصَلِّي وَأَرْقُدُ وَأَتَزَوَّجُ النِّسَاءَ، فَمَنْ رَغِبَ عَنْ سُنَّتِي فَلَيْسَ مِنِّي

[139] Surah Hadid, 27

> A group of three men came to the houses of the wives of the Prophet ﷺ asking how the Prophet ﷺ worshipped (Allah), and when they were informed about that, they considered their worship insufficient and said, "Where are we from the Prophet ﷺ as his past and future sins have been forgiven." Then one of them said, "I will offer the prayer throughout the night forever." The other said, "I will fast throughout the year and will not break my fast." The third said, "I will keep away from the women and will not marry forever." Allah's Messenger ﷺ came to them and said, "Are you the same people who said so-and-so? By Allah, I am more submissive to Allah and more afraid of Him than you; yet I fast and break my fast, I do sleep and I also marry women. So he who does not follow my tradition in religion, is not from me (not one of my followers).[140]

Such guidance makes the trajectory of the early Church impossible; not only because it proscribes extreme self-privation, but also because it prevents the formation of a childless priest class. In a society shaped by such parameters, there is no incentive to systematically dismantle families, or to adopt political and economic models that thrive on breaking down families.

Islam also contains safeguards against the destructive utopianism and false hopes inspired by Protestant theology as a backlash against early Catholic extremism and the resulting hypocrisy. Pain and suffering are viewed as integral to the purpose of human existence. In the Holy Quran, God declares:

وَلَنَبْلُوَنَّكُم بِشَيْءٍ مِّنَ الْخَوْفِ وَالْجُوعِ وَنَقْصٍ مِّنَ الْأَمْوَالِ وَالْأَنفُسِ
وَالثَّمَرَاتِ وَبَشِّرِ الصَّابِرِينَ

[140] Sahih Bukhari, 5063

And We will surely test you with something of fear and hunger and a loss of wealth and lives and fruits, but give good tidings to the patient.[141]

Islam also emphasizes that pain and hardship in life is a means of purification of the soul by expiating sins. An authentic narration records the Prophet Muhammed ﷺ as saying:

مَا يُصِيبُ الْمُسْلِمَ مِنْ نَصَبٍ وَلاَ وَصَبٍ وَلاَ هَمٍّ وَلاَ حُزْنٍ وَلاَ أَذًى وَلاَ غَمٍّ حَتَّى الشَّوْكَةِ يُشَاكُهَا، إِلاَّ كَفَّرَ اللَّهُ بِهَا مِنْ خَطَايَاهُ

No fatigue, nor disease, nor sorrow, nor sadness, nor hurt, nor distress befalls a Muslim, even if it were the prick he receives from a thorn, but that Allah expiates some of his sins for that.[142]

Doctrines like these completely rule out the possibility of a civilizational project of eliminating all suffering, but neither do they condone the kind of deliberate suffering and abuse that traumatized Europe and led to the Reformation. Such doctrines affirm human frailty and weakness, affirming our need for God and His mercy, and do not suggest that we can ever become divine.

Liberal governance and institutions like the United Nations are expressions of an eschatology that has no room for human suffering. To recognize the insanity of the mission of liberalism is not to deny the virtue of relieving human suffering; rather, it means to recognize that to try to reject pain entirely means fighting against the divine decree and denying the higher wisdom behind difficulty and hardship.

Although helping relieve the hardship of others is a fundamentally good deed, destructive forces are important for maintaining equilibrium. The modern ideal of continuous economic growth is exemplary of the problem of

[141] Surah Baqarah, 2:155
[142] Sahih Bukhari, 2641

rejecting all hardship. Environmental destruction and extreme inequality are all obvious symptoms of the desire for perpetual economic growth, but so is increasing social isolation. Maximizing economic growth is not possible except by maximizing consumption, and maximizing consumption requires maximizing individualization of society. This requires breaking down family bonds, and breaking down family bonds requires pushing women to be independent of family.

Western history is a story of oscillation between extremes. Late Roman hedonism gave way to early Christian asceticism, which demonized pleasures of the flesh. This is understandable, since the decadence of Roman elites was likely to blame for many of the ills that faced Europe, including environmental crises such as deforestation and erosion.[143] Doctrines of asceticism helped Europe to recover economically, but they enabled abuses by the clergy and caused religious "burn out" among the masses. With Protestantism, the pendulum started to swing back the other direction, eventually resulting in liberalism and finally consumerism, which in many ways resembles late Roman decadence.

Islam protects against these extremes by balancing community service and asceticism. It also encourages humanity to work to alleviate the suffering of others, but still accept pain and hard times as an expression of God's wisdom and mercy. This tends toward a society that lives in balance with the created nature of the world, rather than trying to amass wealth and power in a quest to dominate and replace it.

This reality is apparent on an ecological level — societies ruled by traditional Islamic values tend to be among the most sustainable in the world, and account for very little of the world's overall pollution. This harmony with nature is also apparent in human nature; Islamic law and morality promotes large, tightly interconnected families and communities. By contrast, modern liberal economic models squelch reproductive and family building instincts in favor of technological production.

The simplicity of Islamic life, although derided as backward by believers in the theology of progress, is much more in harmony with human nature. Without the mission to elevate humans to the level of God by means of

[143] This is discussed at length in *The Fate of Rome* by Kyle Harper.

technology, people are able to live much more relaxed and happy lives, free from the frenetic pace of labor and consumption that characterizes modern consumerist, high-tech economies. The Prophet Muhammed ﷺ, exemplified contentment and gratitude with simplicity, and Islam extolls these qualities as part of the perfection of human character.

الْغِنَى فِي الْقَلْبِ وَالْفَقْرُ فِي الْقَلْبِ مَنْ كَانَ الْغِنَى فِي قَلْبِهِ لا يَضُرُّهُ مَا لَقِيَ مِنَ الدُّنْيَا وَمَنْ كَانَ الْفَقْرُ فِي قَلْبِهِ فَلا يُغْنِيهِ مَا أَكْثَرَ لَهُ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَإِنَّمَا يَضُرُّ نَفْسَهُ شُحُّهَا

> Wealth is in the heart and poverty is in the heart. Whoever is wealthy in his heart will not be harmed no matter what happens in the world. Whoever is impoverished in his heart will not be satisfied no matter how much he has in the world. Verily, he will only be harmed by the greed of his own soul.[144]

Similar sentiment runs through early Christianity, but the emphasis in Islam on adhering to the example of the Prophet ﷺ is a decisive protective factor against something like liberalism's perversion of Christian principles. In a well-known narration, the Prophet ﷺ said:

مَنْ يَعِشْ مِنْكُمْ فَسَيَرَى اخْتِلَافًا كَثِيرًا، فَعَلَيْكُمْ بِسُنَّتِي وَسُنَّةِ الْخُلَفَاءِ الرَّاشِدِينَ الْمَهْدِيينَ، عَضُّوا عَلَيْهَا بِالنَّوَاجِذِ، وَإِيَّاكُمْ وَمُحْدَثَاتِ الْأُمُورِ، فَإِنَّ كُلَّ بِدْعَةٍ ضَلَالَةٌ

[144] al-Mu'jam al-Kabir, 2/154

> He among you who lives long will see great controversy, so you must keep to my Sunnah and to the Sunnah of the rightly guided caliphs, those who guide to the right way. Cling to it stubbornly [literally: with your molar teeth]. Beware of newly invented matters [in the religion], for verily every bid'ah (innovation) is misguidance.[145]

Many such narrations reinforce the principle of preserving the original character of Islam. In the Islamic worldview, the Prophet ﷺ is the culmination of revelation and the highpoint of history. Islamic eschatology foretells a long moral decline prior to the Day of Judgment, which leaves little room for constructing a moral hierarchy based on technological innovation. Without this obsession with technological progress, there is simply no need to abolish traditional gender roles, or to force women into the rat race of corporate or governmental careers, or to glorify financial independence to them. There is no need for sexual liberation to enthrall and numb the population into acceptance of a way of life that oppresses their souls.

Although implementation of Islamic principles throughout history has been far from perfect, Islamic societies nonetheless have a much better record than Western civilization when it comes to issues like mass killing and environmental devastation. Although Western propaganda often depicts Muslims as violent, historic tallies (especially since the beginning of the era of colonialism) show that wars instigated by Western civilization have claimed far more lives, overall and per capita, than those involving Muslims.

Likewise, most of the environmental destruction of the modern era has been instigated by production and trade patterns originating in the West. The theology of progress and its implications are in large part responsible for these destructive tendencies. Traditional gender roles are a reflection of human nature, so the destruction of these gender roles is simply another instance of Western civilization's drive to destroy the original nature of the creation in pursuit of the goals of the theology of progress.

All of this destruction is the price of the economic growth, technology, and "progress" brought by the West. As devastating as this

---

[145] 40 Hadith of Imam an-Nawawi, 28

realization is, what is perhaps most worrying about this trajectory is that the worst damage brought by the liberal obsession with endless growth and development have yet to be seen. Modern modes of production and social organization have generated structural fragility and dependency that threaten to plunge the world into famines, plagues, and war.[146] In this, it is possible to see the justice of the Final Judgment — it is only on the Last Day that the true consequences of beliefs can become fully manifest.

Impact of Gender Segregation on Individuals

Clearly defining marriageable and non-marriageable persons defines how families may be constructed. Regulating interactions between marriageable men and women helps to increase the strength of marital bonds, thus reinforcing the structural integrity of the entire society. Properly implementing these rules results in a robust society based upon ties of kinship.

The Western institutional tradition started with a practice of monasticism and celibacy which laid the foundation for a society based upon undermining ties of kinship. This process of undermining ties of kinship continued over the centuries, culminating today in an unprecedented number of single and divorced people as well as single person households.[147]

---

[146] A few of the numerous examples of this fragility include dependence on non-renewable and/or synthetic inputs in agriculture, dependence on antibiotics coupled with increasingly aggressive antibiotic resistant pathogens, and severe inequality driving global conflicts.

[147] Prior to World War Two, it is estimated that less than 10% of households worldwide were single person households. After the war, this number began to increase, reaching 23% by 1405 H/1985 CE. By 1440H /2018 CE, this figure had increased to 28%, and at current rates will increase to 35% over the next century. These figures are even higher in countries with more gender equality such as Germany and Sweden. The rate of unmarried adults in the West increased from around 10% prior to the war to over 40% today. Even with the acceptance of relationships outside of marriage, the percentage of those not in any kind of romantic relationship increased from 5% in the 1390's H/1970's CE to around 30% in the 1440's H/2020's CE.

At least in the short term, modern institutions like state bureaucracies, multinational corporations, and financial institutions can become much larger and more powerful than traditional kinship based organizations. However, it is possible to learn a lot about the long-term viability of these institutions by considering their effect on the individuals.

On the most obvious level, preventing mixing of marriageable men and women (except with spouses or potential spouses) prevents a number of direct negative influences which can lead to psychological trauma. For women, such rules can eliminate almost all forms of sexual abuse and harassment, particularly in the context of a strong and healthy family possessing faith and fear of God. Inappropriate comments, unwanted touching, unwelcome gazes, and outright rape all become nearly impossible when women are separated from unknown men and embedded in the protective network of extended families governed by Islamic law.

Workplace sexual harassment is a very common complaint among women, and decades of efforts and legal reforms have done little to reduce its prevalence. The psychological effects of harassment vary case by case, but it often results in anxiety, depression, and sometimes contributes to suicide. Antidepressants and anti-anxiety medications are among the most highly prescribed medications in countries with high levels of gender equality, though there are naturally many other factors at play. It is worth noting, however, that consumption of antidepressants is considerably higher among women than men.[148]

Women who work outside the home are also more likely to divorce, which has implications for children. Children of single mothers are much more likely to be sexually abused than those in stable families, and this abuse carries has an even more severe impact on affected individuals than sexual abuse among adults. Victims of child sexual abuse are far more likely to suffer from mental illness, commit crimes (including violent crimes), and to become addicted to drugs or die of drug overdoses.

---

[148] For example, in Australia, a study found that 17% of women and 10% of men took anti-depressants; in the United States, another study found that 17.7% of women and 8.4% of men took them; in the Netherlands, 8.6% of women and 4.6% of men did. This trend is consistent across most countries with high levels of modernization and gender equality.

Men also suffer as a result of the breakdown of gender segregation. Single men who are unable to find a partner suffer less sexual frustration if they experience less exposure to women. Sexual frustration is strongly linked to violence and aggression in men,[149] so reducing levels of sexual frustration among men is one factor that could reduce violent crime overall.

Some modern thinkers, inspired by the works like those of primatologist Frans de Waal, have observed that Bonobo chimpanzees use sex to resolve conflicts, and advocated that humans imitate this behavior. The theory goes that if humans could have sex with each other more freely, they could reduce tension and violence and have more peaceful societies like the Bonobos. These writers do not mention, however, that conflict could also be avoided by reducing sexual frustration in the first place. Advocates of this theory also fail to recognize that overstimulation reduces sexual satisfaction, reducing the social and psychological benefits of sex.

Many who look at chimpanzees as models for human behavior also view jealousy as an unnecessary evolutionary vestige which holds people back from achieving sexual liberation. Yet, even supposedly enlightened liberals have been almost entirely unable to evolve beyond jealousy in romantic relationships. Most women get upset by their male partners looking at and having relationships with other women, and most men get upset by their female partners having relationships with other men.

Exposure to women also negatively affects married men. When men habitually look at women other than their wives, it often leads to dissatisfaction as they compare their wives to other women. Most women are also quick to notice when their husbands are admiring other women, and it usually makes them quite unhappy. When women feel they are not getting enough attention from their husbands, it sometimes pushes them to seek validation from other men by wearing makeup or attractive clothing in public. When men notice this, it can make them perceive their wives as disloyal. This, in turn, can lead to a vicious cycle where men become more interested in women other than their wives, and women seek more attention from men other than their husbands.

---

[149] See *A sexual frustration theory of aggression, violence and crime* by Adam Lankford.

Seeking gratification outside of marriage also makes general social conditions worse. If women adorn themselves to get something that is missing in their marriage, they will attract the attention of married men in the process, harming other people's marriages. All of this contributes to lower quality marriages and higher incidence of infidelity.

Mixing of men and women can and frequently does contribute to the destruction of marital relationships. In studies on divorce, marital infidelity is consistently one of the most cited justifications for divorce. In studies on infidelity, the most common place for affairs to begin is the workplace by a wide margin, despite recent gains by the internet.

Even if these problems don't lead to outright infidelity, they can contribute to separation or divorce by diminishing the respect and love between a couple. Emotional affairs that do not reach the point of sex can have devastating effects on marriages. They often detract from the quality of the sexual relationship between a husband and wife — another major factor contributing to divorces.

Prevention is better than cure, and preventing interactions between unrelated men and women can prevent almost all extramarital relationships that have detrimental effects on marriages. Removing other potential objects of attraction focuses all of the force of emotional love and sexual attraction within a marriage, greatly strengthening the bond of marriage.

It's true that normalizing mixing of men and women in the public sphere has driven a lot of economic growth, but it comes with a tremendous price as well. Weaker and more unstable marriages lead to more divorce, as well as other problems. A large number of murders worldwide are related to marital conflicts, and infidelity in particular. Even where outright murder does not result, other forms of violence can result in hospitalization and litigation. Divorce often leads to expensive court battles, decreased productivity, depression, and anxiety. According to some studies, divorced individuals are twice as likely to commit suicide than married people.[150]

These effects are minor, however, compared to the impacts on children. Children of divorced parents are far more likely to suffer from mental illness, engage in criminality, become addicted to drugs, and commit

---

[150] Augustine J. Kposowa, *National Longitudinal Mortality Study*

suicide. They are also more likely to divorce, resulting in generational cycles of dysfunction. As divorce and relationship instability become more prevalent, the decline in social stability will compound with each generation. Even if material gains come from abandoning gender segregation, these profits come at a steep emotional and psychological price. As the material quality of life increases, the social quality decreases.

All of this illustrates a simple but profound truth; that Islam is an expression of divine mercy.

وَمَآ أَرۡسَلۡنَٰكَ إِلَّا رَحۡمَةٗ لِّلۡعَٰلَمِينَ

And We have not sent you, [O Muhammad], except as a mercy to the worlds.[151]

The guidance of divine revelation is from a merciful Lord who wishes well-being for humanity. Following divine guidance in matters of gender segregation does not only lead to more satisfying and stable relationships and healthier families; it also supports human spiritual wellbeing. The true purpose of human existence is to worship our Creator.

وَمَا خَلَقۡتُ ٱلۡجِنَّ وَٱلۡإِنسَ إِلَّا لِيَعۡبُدُونِ

And I did not create the jinn and mankind except to worship Me.[152]

A state of mental and emotional tranquility is more conducive to contemplating higher truths and other acts of devotion. Constant exposure to objects of attraction, emotional turmoil, and instability all tend to distract people from fulfilling their true purpose, and fulfilling this purpose is key to

[151] Surah al Anbiya, 107
[152] Surah adh-Dhariyat, 56

success in eternity. From among the most powerful expressions of God's mercy is that He created marriage for the purpose of finding tranquility therein:

وَمِنْ ءَايَٰتِهِۦٓ أَنْ خَلَقَ لَكُم مِّنْ أَنفُسِكُمْ أَزْوَٰجًا لِّتَسْكُنُوٓا۟ إِلَيْهَا
وَجَعَلَ بَيْنَكُم مَّوَدَّةً وَرَحْمَةً ۚ إِنَّ فِى ذَٰلِكَ لَءَايَٰتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ

> And of His signs is that He created for you from yourselves mates that you may find tranquillity in them; and He placed between you affection and mercy. Indeed, in that are signs for a people who give thought.[153]

A stable and supportive marriage provides a sense of mental and emotional security which allows men and women to concentrate on worship and purification of the soul rather than being dragged around by desires, hopes, and worries. This reality is also visible when considering the motives of Satan, who said regarding humanity:

وَلَأُضِلَّنَّهُمْ وَلَأُمَنِّيَنَّهُمْ وَلَءَامُرَنَّهُمْ فَلَيُبَتِّكُنَّ ءَاذَانَ ٱلْأَنْعَٰمِ وَلَءَامُرَنَّهُمْ
فَلَيُغَيِّرُنَّ خَلْقَ ٱللَّهِ ۚ وَمَن يَتَّخِذِ ٱلشَّيْطَٰنَ وَلِيًّا مِّن دُونِ ٱللَّهِ فَقَدْ خَسِرَ
خُسْرَانًا مُّبِينًا

> "And I will mislead them, and I will arouse in them [sinful] desires, and I will command them so they will slit the ears of cattle, and I will

[153] Surah ar-Rum, 21

command them so they will change the creation of Allah." And whoever takes Satan as an ally instead of Allah has certainly sustained a clear loss.[154]

The basic goal of Satan is to divert humanity from their true purpose and lead us into destruction. Stimulating desire is one of the most powerful means of doing this, and so is changing God's creation. Slitting the ears of cattle here refers to a pagan practice of mutilating cattle to dedicate them to idols, but attempting to change the creation is general to Satanic logic. Attempting to abolish gender roles based upon male and female biology is such an instance of rebellion and rejection of divine order. Pushing women to take on careers in institutions shaped by and for men leads to stimulation of sinful desires and the breakdown of gender roles aligned with God's creation. It also contributes to divorce, which is a central objective of Satan:

قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم " إِنَّ إِبْلِيسَ يَضَعُ عَرْشَهُ عَلَى الْمَاءِ ثُمَّ يَبْعَثُ سَرَايَاهُ فَأَدْنَاهُمْ مِنْهُ مَنْزِلَةً أَعْظَمُهُمْ فِتْنَةً يَجِيءُ أَحَدُهُمْ فَيَقُولُ فَعَلْتُ كَذَا وَكَذَا فَيَقُولُ مَا صَنَعْتَ شَيْئًا قَالَ ثُمَّ يَجِيءُ أَحَدُهُمْ فَيَقُولُ مَا تَرَكْتُهُ حَتَّى فَرَّقْتُ بَيْنَهُ وَبَيْنَ امْرَأَتِهِ - قَالَ - فَيُدْنِيهِ مِنْهُ وَيَقُولُ نِعْمَ أَنْتَ " . قَالَ الأَعْمَشُ أُرَاهُ قَالَ " فَيَلْتَزِمُهُ "

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: Iblis places his throne upon water; he then sends detachments (for creating dissension) ; the nearer to him in rank are those who are most notorious in creating dissension. One

[154] Surah an-Nisa, 119

> of them comes and says: "I did so and so." And he says: "You have done nothing." Then one amongst them comes and says: "I did not spare so and so until I sowed the seed of discord between a husband and a wife." Then Satan goes near him and says: "You have done well." A'mash said: He then embraces him.[155]

This is the polar opposite of the divine decree, which seeks to establish love, harmony, and tranquility between spouses, and to maintain the ties of kinship. This ultimately promotes the psychological and social health and wellbeing of every member of society. A number of modern studies have linked an individual's connection to their family to a strong sense of identity,[156] and a strong sense of identity is strongly linked to mental health and success in life.[157]

Islamic morality, including gender segregation, thus leads to a much more harmonious condition for society, more fulfilling lives for individuals, and most importantly, a social environment conducive to increasing one's awareness of God, performing good deeds, and avoiding oppression of others and oneself.

The Corrupting Influence of Power

The project of perpetual economic growth and technological development requires continuous centralization of wealth and power. While the Church set the template for this process, which was later taken over by industry, state, and finance, it led to abuses which gave rise to liberalism and its obsession with equality, including feminism's focus on gender equality.

In some respects, this is actually a point of agreement between Islam and liberalism. A core principle of liberalism is the idea that excessive concentration of power leads to corruption. The most obvious expression of this principle is emphasis on democratic ideals and separation of church and

---

[155] Sahih Muslim, 2813b

[156] See *Adolescent Family Context and Adult Identity Formation* by Benson and Johnson and other similar research.

state, but the same principle also drives ideas about reducing the authority of husbands and fathers.

Islam also emphasizes the fallibility of human beings.

وَخُلِقَ ٱلۡإِنسَٰنُ ضَعِيفٗا

And mankind was created weak.[158]

Islam revolves this problem not by distributing absolute power to a larger group, but by bounding human authority within the limitations of divine law. If absolute power corrupts absolutely, then transferring absolute power from the aristocracy and clergy to the electorate would simply mean shifting from a society ruled by a small group of extremely corrupt individuals to a society ruled by a large group of moderately corrupt individuals.

The root cause of liberalism and secularism was in large part excessive power invested in the clergy. Islam prevents the formation of an excessively powerful clergy by mandating a strong separation of religious scholars and the state. One narration describes the Prophet ﷺ saying:

مَنْ سَكَنَ الْبَادِيَةَ جَفَا وَمَنِ اتَّبَعَ الصَّيْدَ غَفَلَ وَمَنْ أَتَى السُّلْطَانَ افْتُتِنَ

> He who lives in the desert will become rough; he who pursues game (by indulging excessively in hunting) will be negligent, and he who visits the ruler falls into trials (in religion).[159]

---

[157] See *Self-concept differentiation and self-concept clarity across adulthood: associations with age and psychological well-being* by Diehl and Hay, *Family Functioning, Identity Commitments, and School Value among Ethnic Minority and Ethnic Majority Adolescents* by Mastrotheodoros, and similar.

[158] Surah an-Nisa, 28

[159] Sunan Abi Dawud, 2859

He ﷺ also said:

إياكم وأبواب السلطان

Beware the doors of the rulers.[160]

There are many similar narrations of more questionable authenticity, but it is without dispute that the scholars among the early generations of Muslims avoided contact with rulers. The early Muslim scholar Salamah ibn Dinar (died 140 H/757 CE), may Allah have mercy on him, said:

إن خير الأمراء من أحب العلماء، وأن شر العلماء من أحب الأمراء. وكانوا فيما مضى إذا بعث الأمراء إلى العلماء لم يأتوهم، وإذا سألوهم لم يرخصوا لهم وكان الأمراء يأتون العلماء في بيوتهم فيسألونهم، وكان في ذلك صلاح للأمراء وصلاح للعلماء

The best rulers are those who love the scholars, and the worst scholars are those who love the rulers. In the past, if the rulers sent for a scholar they would not go to him, and if they asked them about something they would not make it permissible for them, and the rulers would go to the scholars in their houses and ask them, and in that there was goodness for both the rulers and the scholars.[161]

[160] Sahih al Jama', 2672
[161] Hilyat al Awliya 3/245

Although the number of corrupt scholars increased with time, later generations still upheld this principle. When the ruler of Bukhara summoned Imam Bukhari, the famous compiler of prophetic hadith, he replied to him "I will not demean the knowledge, nor do I go to the door of the ruler. If you need something from (my books), come to my masjid or my home."[162]

The position of religious knowledge in Islam is above that of worldly power, and fundamental laws cannot be modified to serve political interests. When this principle is correctly applied, it means that Islamic scholars become a check against tyrannical authority rather than enablers of it. Given the vast political influence religious scholars can wield, this acts as a kind of equivalent to the checks and balances of modern liberal political theory.

The checks and balances of liberalism have ultimately failed to prevent excessive concentration of power. Although they distributed political power via democracy, democracies are ultimately influenced by finance due to the importance of mass media and the high cost of political campaigns. Interest-based financing steadily concentrates more and more wealth in the hands of the elite, who in turn use their wealth to manipulate and control democratic politics.

The Protestant vision of perpetual economic growth and the Jewish propensity to control non-Jews using interest-based financing are natural companions, because technological development requires concentration of wealth. The logic of economic efficiency, economy of scale, and specialization all give a major advantage to those who have more capital to invest.

The progress and development of the liberal world order, made possible in part by feminist rhetoric, has led to a social hierarchy more unequal than any other in history. This extreme inequality manifests not only in wealth distribution, but also ever more oppressive states whose survival depends on mandatory public schooling, mass surveillance, mass imprisonment, militarized borders, and support for brutal dictators around the world.

Communism was a response to this dynamic, and resulted in far more bloodshed than any of the explicitly religious wars that inspired secularism.

---

[162] Siyar A'lam al-Nubula, 12/464

This is another case of swinging from one extreme to another; while capitalism made self-interest the main organizing principle of the economy, communism sought to suppress it completely by eliminating private property entirely.

A central premise of communism is the idea that religion is merely a means of suppressing and controlling the working classes. This sentiment arises mainly from abuses of power by the medieval clergy, a problem that Islamic principles effectively control by mandating the separation of religious scholars from government. This prevents the excess concentration of power seen in Europe's Christian clergy; instead, an independent class of religious scholars acts as a check against the power of tyrants. At the same time, the immutable divine prohibition on interest-based financing prevents excess concentration of financial power. In this sense, Islam already solved the problem of excessive concentration of power longer before the development of secularism and liberalism.

The total prohibition of interest has major implications for women. If all money is created by means of interest-bearing debt, borrowers consistently have to find more money. Unpaid housework such as childcare and cooking do not generate money, so the more it becomes necessary to borrow money in order to live, the more pressure there is on women to leave unpaid labor and move toward paid labor.

Interest-based financing was also prohibited under Christianity for many centuries, but Christian scripture, and the New Testament in particular, is much more spiritual and less legalistic than the revelation of Islam. There is a simple explanation for this; the message of Jesus was never intended to be a guiding system of jurisprudence for the entire world, but rather spiritual guidance for the tribe of Israel until the revelation of Islam. Furthermore, because Christians lived under pagan rulers for the first centuries, they faced intense persecution. This resulted in a relative lack of recorded narrations of the message of Jesus, leaving more room for creative future interpretations.

This points to the wisdom of two elements of Islamic law which often stir controversy in modern discourse; jihad and the death penalty for apostasy. It was because of jihad that Islam became a dominant political force, enabling the preservation of an enormous body of scholarship and historical records which form the foundation of Islamic law. This rigorous scholarship

imparts Islamic law with a high degree of clarity and precision on topics ranging from hygiene to marriage to property law to spirituality.

Islamic law also establishes certain principles, including the prohibition on interest and some laws relating to gender, as sacrosanct, and unambiguously requires the death penalty for Muslims who attempt to change or replace these laws.

For those living in the collective memory of Western Christendom, this idea triggers a traumatic collective memory grisly executions and inquisition, where a corrupt clergy tortured and executed their opponents over seemingly small doctrinal differences. However, while there are many abuses in the Church's handling of heresy, modern histories tend to overlook the fact that harsh enforcement of doctrinal unity was a relatively cost effective manner of maintaining public order and stability. The modern state, by contrast, depends on costly technology and bureaucracy to maintain order.

While modern human rights regimes might appear to be less harsh on the surface, they are based upon an extremely violent history of colonial exploitation and injustice. These grievances relate not only to the past; rather, they are an ongoing part of the modern world order. It is very unlikely that this order could survive if these grievances were truly redressed, so it is a serious mistake to think that safeguarding the integrity of divine law with capital punishment represents regression. Rather, from a holistic perspective, considering the harms of modern institutions like debt slavery and militarized borders, it is both morally and materially necessary to seek alternatives to modern modes of establishing security and stability.

Islam's balance of power is one such factor establishing social security and stability; if Islamic law is properly applied, neither religious scholars nor ruling elite can gain enough power to reach the levels of tyranny that inspired secularism and the liberal obsession with equality that eventually gave rise to feminism. Nor can a wealthy class of bankers use usury to gain a stranglehold on the whole of society. This prevents the kind of extreme economic inequality that caused so much conflict in the modern era, including the tens of millions killed by communist revolutions and the immigration crises on the southern borders of Europe and the United States.

The War Against Divine Will

The narrative of Satan's fall from grace describes a basic principle underlying all expressions of evil; rejection of the divine command. This is the true "original sin." The Holy Qur'an emphasized that it was Satan's arrogance that caused him to reject the creation of humanity:

وَلَقَدْ خَلَقْنَٰكُمْ ثُمَّ صَوَّرْنَٰكُمْ ثُمَّ قُلْنَا لِلْمَلَٰٓئِكَةِ ٱسْجُدُوا۟ لِءَادَمَ فَسَجَدُوٓا۟ إِلَّآ
إِبْلِيسَ لَمْ يَكُن مِّنَ ٱلسَّٰجِدِينَ * قَالَ مَا مَنَعَكَ أَلَّا تَسْجُدَ إِذْ أَمَرْتُكَ قَالَ
أَنَا۠ خَيْرٌ مِّنْهُ خَلَقْتَنِي مِن نَّارٍ وَخَلَقْتَهُۥ مِن طِينٍ

> And We have certainly created you, [O Mankind], and given you [human] form. Then We said to the angels, "Prostrate to Adam"; so they prostrated, except for Iblees. He was not of those who prostrated. [Allah] said, "What prevented you from prostrating when I commanded you?" [Satan] said, "I am better than him. You created me from fire and created him from clay."[163]

Satan's rebellion against the divine order is not limited to humanity, but general. It entails rejecting gender roles based upon human biology and reproduction, and extends to a destructive attitude toward the natural world. The result is a system which destroys the natural beauty of the earth in order to produce technology which replaces and renders human beings obsolete.

This is all part of Satan's mission is to divert human beings from their true purpose; the worship of the Lord of the universe.

[163] Surah al A'raf, 11-12

إِنَّمَا يُرِيدُ ٱلشَّيۡطَٰنُ أَن يُوقِعَ بَيۡنَكُمُ ٱلۡعَدَٰوَةَ وَٱلۡبَغۡضَآءَ فِي ٱلۡخَمۡرِ
وَٱلۡمَيۡسِرِ وَيَصُدَّكُمۡ عَن ذِكۡرِ ٱللَّهِ وَعَنِ ٱلصَّلَوٰةِۖ فَهَلۡ أَنتُم مُّنتَهُونَ

Satan only wants to cause between you animosity and hatred through intoxicants and gambling and to avert you from the remembrance of Allah and from prayer. So will you not desist?[164]

Rejecting divine order is a logical extension of the project to divert humanity from worship. To reject the harmony and wisdom of traditional gender roles, and instead portraying them as backward and oppressive, is strongly linked to the idea that the natural order of creation is defective and requires rectification by means of human effort and ingenuity. When this rectification occurs by means of technology and innovation, it entails environmental destruction such as strip mining, industrial pollution, and contamination of the oceans.

These destructive aspects of modernity also support the Satanic objective of diverting human beings from worshipping their creator. God expounds upon the purpose of both love between men and women and the natural world, clarifying that these are signs for us.

وَمِنۡ ءَايَٰتِهِۦٓ أَنۡ خَلَقَ لَكُم مِّنۡ أَنفُسِكُمۡ أَزۡوَٰجٗا لِّتَسۡكُنُوٓاْ إِلَيۡهَا وَجَعَلَ
بَيۡنَكُم مَّوَدَّةٗ وَرَحۡمَةًۚ إِنَّ فِي ذَٰلِكَ لَأٓيَٰتٖ لِّقَوۡمٖ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ * وَمِنۡ ءَايَٰتِهِۦ خَلۡقُ
ٱلسَّمَٰوَٰتِ وَٱلۡأَرۡضِ وَٱخۡتِلَٰفُ أَلۡسِنَتِكُمۡ وَأَلۡوَٰنِكُمۡۚ إِنَّ فِي ذَٰلِكَ لَأٓيَٰتٖ لِّلۡعَٰلِمِينَ

And among His signs is that He created for you spouses from among yourselves so that you may find tranquility in them... And among His signs is the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the diversity

[164] Surah al Ma'idah, 91

of your languages and colors. Indeed in that are signs for those of knowledge. [165]

One of the purposes of these signs is to make us grateful to our Lord. One such example is the bounty of the oceans:

وَهُوَ ٱلَّذِي سَخَّرَ ٱلْبَحْرَ لِتَأْكُلُوا۟ مِنْهُ لَحْمًا طَرِيًّا وَتَسْتَخْرِجُوا۟ مِنْهُ حِلْيَةً تَلْبَسُونَهَا ۖ وَتَرَى ٱلْفُلْكَ مَوَاخِرَ فِيهِ وَلِتَبْتَغُوا۟ مِن فَضْلِهِۦ وَلَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ

And it is He who subjected the sea for you to eat from it tender meat and to extract from it ornaments which you wear. And you see the ships plowing through it, and [He subjected it] that you may seek of His bounty; and that you may be grateful.[166]

Living in close connection and harmony with nature (including our own nature) is something that inspires awe and gratitude toward our Creator. Conversely, an ideology that portrays social relations that harmonize with nature as inherently flawed and backward pushes people toward arrogance and admiration of human achievement rather than divine grace. Feminists almost universally view contraception, mass female participation in formal education, and independent wages for women as factors contributing to women's liberation, despite the fact that the development of all of these depended on severe ecological and social destruction.

Deforestation, strip mining, toxification of rivers and oceans, depletion of fisheries, and caustic monoculture plantations, colonialism and militarized borders all contribute to modern economic systems that make mass availability of contraception, education, and independent wage employment for women possible.

---

[165] Surah ar Rum, 21-22

[166] Surah an-Nahl, 14

Implicit in celebrating these "liberating" factors is the idea that the traditional systems are innately oppressive. This means that by extension the material circumstances that gave rise to traditional systems are also understood as oppressive. Taken to its logical conclusion, this ascribes injustice to the original configuration of creation, and therefore the Creator.

Although most feminists are critical of modern economic systems, rejection of traditional gender roles is consistent with many other dynamics of these systems. Modern economic systems not only cover the earth's beauty and colors with grey concrete sprawl and block out the stars with light pollution, they also contribute to hormonal degradation which disrupts the biochemical basis for gender and sexuality. This biochemical contamination compounds the social war on traditional gender roles, where housewives are regarded as jobless, and shy and modest women as backward and oppressed.

These dynamics are consistent with the literal meaning of disbelief in Islamic discourse; *kufr*. Mass destruction of natural habitats, oceans, light pollution, urbanization and urban sprawl, individualization, and lower rates of fertility and marriage are all factors that try to cover up the vast bounty, mercy, and beauty of God's creation. Less contact with nature, including the blessings of marriage and childbirth, contributes to the Satanic project of diverting humanity away from remembrance of the Most High.

Islam is a holistic way of life which preserves not only the blessings of human families and community, but also the broader ecological health of the earth. Although it does not necessarily enable the kind of rampant growth that characterizes the modern world order, Islam trains humans to be content with much less. When considering the impact of Islam from an historical perspective, it is worth remembering that Western hedonism and materialism are in part a response to the excessive asceticism of Christian monasticism. It is thus not only through obligatory fasting and charity that Islam prevents the rampant over-consumption of the modern world order, but also by means of preventing extremism in worship.

Islam does not call upon us to re-engineer human psychology and biology to eliminate perceived errors; instead, it preserves the created order and channels gender differences for the benefit of humanity. Islam is derided by its critics as leading to lower rates of economic growth and technological development, but if we look behind the scenes of this critique, we find that it

is really a critique of healthy marriages, healthy families, and a general state of internal contentment and peace. A person who is grateful and satisfied with their condition will never achieve the same level of productivity as one who is driven by seeking empty status symbols and luxuries. Someone who internalizes an Islamic understanding of history, creed, and eschatology will not seek to achieve a technological utopia, nor to establish a social order that requires total domination of nature. Nor will they seek to attain immortality or god-like powers.

As the environmental consequences of modern economies become more apparent, the environmentalist movement has grown. Environmentalists seek to mitigate problems of modernity, just as feminists sought to mitigate the detrimental effects of modernity on women. Environmentalist solutions, like reducing carbon emissions, protecting oceans and rainforests from industrial contamination, and recycling, often miss the underlying causes of these problems. Even if wealthy, liberal societies have adopted sustainability as a core mantra, they continue to depend on cheap resources and labor from regions where environmental destruction is widespread. If the whole world were to adopt sustainable economic practices, modern economic organization and the gender roles based upon it would no longer be viable.

Sustainability discourse for the most part only addresses the symptoms of modern economic organization. Overconsumption driven by lack of spiritual fulfillment is the true underlying cause. This spiritual deficiency manifests not only in gluttonous and vain consumption, but also in the quest to escape death, an obsession of modern billionaires. Whether it is the quest to prolong human life to the point of immortality through space exploration or biomedical research, or the desire to erase innate gender disparities, rejecting the nature of human existence is extremely resource intensive.

From this high level perspective, it becomes apparent that the crusade of liberal modernity is unwinnable, because it is a war against the balance of nature, and by extension a war against God. Islam, like the equilibrium of nature, is a force of divine will. The more Western civilization tries to ascend to strive toward absolute power and immortality, the further from equilibrium it strays, and more difficult it becomes to continue the project of civilizational theosis.

This is the same basic dynamic exemplified by the narrative of the children of Israel and the Pharaoh. This is visible not only in the scriptural narrative, but also the archaeological record — the pyramids were ultimately an attempt to escape mortality, and thus all of the oppression and transgression were part of an attempt to escape death and claim divine status. Moses exposed this falsehood, and as a result the Pharaoh sought to pursue him, but this pursuit was ultimately the cause of his own destruction. This is an eternal lesson that those who wage war against the divine command ultimately destroy themselves by their own actions.

Politicization of History

Feminist discourse is a product of Western collective memory. Attempts to export feminist discourse outside the West are thus actually attempts to universalize the Western experience. A large part of third wave feminism is an attempt to grapple with this realization. In its functional aspects, this means that societies that adopt Western institutions almost invariably need to adopt aspects of feminist theory, because feminist discourse is a key part of the institutional evolution of the West.

The experience shaping this history includes the horrors of the European middle ages, the systematic dismantling of the extended family, the witch hunts, and industrialization. These collective traumas have resulted in certain assumptions about history; that modernity represents better quality of life than pre-modern life; that religious governance is more susceptible to corruption than governance based upon science; that traditional religious doctrines are innately oppressive to women. These assumptions do not hold true for the Islamic world.

Never in Islamic history do we find episodes of mass killing directed primarily at women. Nor is there any record of systematically stripping women of rights that they once had, whether the right to own property, work in a family workshop, or devote themselves to prayer and study. Recourse to divorce was always available in unhappy marriages, and women's inheritance and property rights were sacrosanct. Depiction of God in the likeness of a

human male was strictly prohibited, and Quranic narratives of the fall from the garden assign responsibility to both Adam and Eve.

Islam had no corrupt clergy facilitating the concentration of wealth in the hands of the aristocracy; on the contrary, scholars throughout Islamic history clashed with rulers and acted as a counterbalance to the power of the political elite. The institutions of polygyny and concubinage, while hated by modern feminists, included strict legal obligations for men to provide for their sexual partners and children resulting from the relationships. Islamic law also ensured that children from both wives and concubines had equal inheritance rights. By contrast, European history is filled with bastard children deprived of any inheritance and neglected and discarded mistresses. Nowhere in the Islamic world ever experienced an epidemic of female suicide like the one in the early Industrial Revolution.

Given this situation, there was no pressing need for women in Islamic societies to compete with men on the labor market or become financially independent. Given that Islamic law already protected women's rights, there was likewise no need for women to seek formal political representation to fight for those rights. Islamic law required that men and women both take care of each other, and that men take responsibility for any children born from him — no matter how many women they inclined toward. Any sex outside these formal legal channels was typically dealt with harshly, and at least in theory could be punishable by death.

Christianity always conceived itself as a universal religion, and liberalism inherited this sentiment. Liberalism, including feminism, must have a convincing claim to universality in order to claim moral authority over non-Western societies. In order to achieve this universality, liberalism must both replicate the conditions of early industrial Europe in colonized societies, and develop histories that emphasize a bleak past from which feminism provides an escape.

This is in fact what modern economic colonialism does; it replicates the process of enclosure in Asia, Latin America, and Africa, by pushing traditional farmers of their land and organizing it instead under large centralized farms. Masses of displaced rural poor flee to factory jobs in urban centers (where men are usually paid much better than women), forming slums in the process. These slums are rife with alcohol and drug abuse and violence

against women, and feminist NGOs funded by the West actively work to spread liberal and feminist doctrines, both via shelters for battered women and school systems.

Some modern studies found that violence against women is dramatically higher in countries that were colonized by Europe relative than those that were not.[167] In other words, spreading European diseases was necessary for marketing European cures.

It is impossible to escape the political dimension of history. Moving closer to the truth requires recognizing how inescapably rooted in Western history feminist imperatives are, and clearly articulating alternative narratives from other cultures and traditions. Even more importantly, it is necessary to understand the root causes behind the iniquities that feminism seeks to address. This is to say that Muslim critics of feminist discourse must not only be able to articulate where and why Western civilization went wrong, but also how Islam protects against these problems.

Unfortunately, this project is dead in the water as long as Muslims continue to imitate Western institutional structures. The dogged imitation of the nation-state, secular public schools, commercial law modelled after the British and French traditions, and industrial policy that plagues the Muslim world is in fact a reflection of internalizing Western histories. It is only once a person believes that these institutions can help them to escape a miserable past that they will invest in a future defined by them.

The project of revitalizing Islamic civilization thus depends upon constructing Islamic histories that reflect the beauty and efficacy of Islamic law. Much of this work has already been accomplished by Islamic scholarship; returning to these narratives requires first and foremost stepping outside of materialist assumptions.

إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِندَ ٱللَّهِ أَتْقَىٰكُمْ ۚ إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ خَبِيرٌ

[167] See Jenevieve Mannell, *How colonialism is a major cause of domestic abuse against women around the world*

> Indeed, the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous of you. Indeed, Allah is Knowing and Acquainted.[168]

Although Protestant morality began by exalting the moral dimension of improving material conditions for humanity, the modern world system makes it the sole measure of progress. Islamic history, by contrast, is filled with examples of saints and heroes who reached the heights of piety and morality despite humble material means. Material progress is only beneficial insofar as it supports our capacity for worship and moral action. The moment any technology or mode of economic organization starts to diminish a people's consciousness of God is the moment that it becomes harmful, regardless of how many people it feeds or how many comforts it generates.

Islam as a World System

Feminist rhetoric today is undeniably an important component of a world system. As societies transition into modernity and women lose traditional sources of power and protection, they must seek other sources of power and protection. Feminism today is relevant to Muslim societies only to the extent that they have undergone institutional transformation modelled after the Western experience. The more industrialization, bureaucratization, and financialization a society undergoes, the more it will need feminism.

A world system must have universal appeal. Participants in the system must not only benefit from the system, but also identify with it. It's easy to see why liberalism has had some success in building a world system. It is based on something everyone can relate to — fulfilling human desires. The entire moral, political, and economic system of liberalism revolves around this simple goal. This is the core reason why South Korea is seen as a model state while North Korea is a rogue pariah state; the South contributes to the global vision of progress, while the North menaces it.

---

[168] Surah Hujurat, 13

Despite the clear signs that a way of life based upon desire is wreaking havoc on the earth's ecosystems and causing demographic collapse, people continue chasing their desires. Desire is such a powerful motivating factor, it is hard to compete with this system. However, this system is ultimately based upon injustice and falsehood, and is thus doomed to perish.

وَقُلْ جَآءَ ٱلْحَقُّ وَزَهَقَ ٱلْبَٰطِلُ ۚ إِنَّ ٱلْبَٰطِلَ كَانَ زَهُوقًا

> And say, "Truth has come, and falsehood has departed. Indeed is falsehood, [by nature], ever bound to depart."[169]

Utopian visions of perpetual economic growth, technological development and equality are attractive on the surface, but these ideals have always been based on a fundamentally unjust and untrue hierarchy. The hierarchy firstly upholds the idea that European races are somehow superior. This is necessarily the case if economic and technological development equal moral superiority. Secondly, the hierarchy depends on the idea of a linear sequence of development, where Western nations are more developed than others, but where the whole world can eventually "mature" or develop into something resembling the Western model.

In fact, the first lie depends on the second lie. Western technological and economic dominance depend entirely on subordinating and looting the rest of the world. The only reason the rest of the world continues to cooperate with this illusion is because of the idea that they can too somehow achieve a standard of living similar to that of the West. These lies will eventually bump up against reality. Dwindling resource availability will lead to economic crises, and high-minded talk about "human rights" will give way to harsh nationalistic and ethnic-supremacist policies, and all illusions of moral superiority will evaporate.

As resource conflicts mount and economic problems intensify, supposedly "advanced" societies will have to cope not only with these

---

[169] Surah al-Isra, 81

problems, but also the many side effects resulting from the technology itself. For those willing to use reason, it will become ever more apparent that the same development that was a supposed mark of superiority is actually the root cause of the turmoil gripping the world. As it becomes clearer that the Western development model does not represent something worth imitating, the declining appeal of the liberal world system will accelerate.

Liberalism, despite appearing to oppose traditional Christianity in many regards, is still in many ways an expression of Christian principles. Certainly the image of a European man as lord and savior of humanity contributed to the ethnic European supremacism of the modern world system, but many of the contradictions and failures of liberalism as a world system can be traced back to the fact that Christianity was never meant to be a world system. This sentiment is clearly expressed in the New Testament:

> And a Canaanite woman from that region came to Him, crying out, "Lord, Son of David, have mercy on me! My daughter is miserably possessed by a demon." But Jesus did not answer a word. So His disciples came and urged Him, "Send her away, for she keeps crying out after us." He answered, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel."[170]

This sentiment was confirmed by the Prophet Muhammed ﷺ in an authentic narration:

وَكَانَ النَّبِيُّ يُبْعَثُ إِلَى قَوْمِهِ خَاصَّةً، وَبُعِثْتُ إِلَى النَّاسِ عَامَّةً

Every Prophet used to be sent to his nation only but I have been sent to all mankind.[171]

The universality of Islam is confirmed in some Quranic verses as well, most notably:

---

[170] Matthew 15:22-24
[171] Sahih Bukhari, 335

وَمَآ أَرۡسَلۡنَٰكَ إِلَّا رَحۡمَةٗ لِّلۡعَٰلَمِينَ

And We have not sent you, [O Muhammad], except as a mercy to the worlds.[172]

While this verse alludes to the essential nature of revelation as an expression of divine grace, it is also an evidence of the universality of Islam. The New Testament dedicates significant attention, including portions of the Book of Acts, Galatians, and Ephesians, to debates between early Christians on whether or not Jesus' message was intended for gentiles. The views of those that believed it was not have been lost, and only Pauline views have been preserved.

The teachings contained in the New Testament are primarily spiritual, in contrast to the many legalistic aspects of the Torah. The Torah is very explicit that these laws are not meant for non-Jews, and Jewish identity is clearly defined by lineage. Attempting to use Christian scripture as the legal foundation for a universal governmental system was problematic from the start, especially after developing the doctrine of the "New Covenant" which effectively abolished Mosaic law despite the opposition of many early Christian sects.

Islamic scripture, by contrast, contains both spiritual and legalistic elements, expressly intended as guidance for all of humanity. The clarity of Islamic law allows neither for the excessive power that gave rise to a corrupt clergy in Europe, nor for the looseness of interpretation that allowed for the post-Reformation legalizing of usury and theology of progress. Islam represents a balance between the historical oscillation between extremes of Western civilization. It leads to neither the extreme tyranny and misery of European feudalism, nor the gluttony and excess of modern consumerism. In the sphere of the family, it leads neither to the extreme abuse of women of Christendom's past, nor to the atomization and isolation of the present. Speaking to the Muslims, God says:

---

[172] Surah al Anbiya, 107

وَكَذَٰلِكَ جَعَلْنَاكُمْ أُمَّةً وَسَطًا

And thus We made you a middle nation...[173]

Beyond offering a historical perspective on the theological origins and socio-economic function of feminist discourse, this book can be read as a post-mortem of what went wrong with Western civilization. A careful and honest consideration of the lessons of this history along with a basic understanding of the principles of Islamic governance point to the conclusion that the pitfalls Western civilization fell into, including the current crisis of feminism, family, and fertility, could have been avoided by adhering to Islamic principles. For Muslims, this should fortify a sense of the importance of upholding sharia not only as a code of personal conduct, but as a political and legal system governing the affairs of humanity. For those who have not accepted Islam, this realization is a call to recognize the divine wisdom of the message that was revealed to Muhammed, may the peace and blessing of God be upon him.

A Solution to Modern Problems and the Fear of "Going Back"

Islam holds the solutions to the problems of the institutional trinity of modernity — industry, state, and finance.

There is no concept of "limited liability" in Islam, so industrialists must take full accountability for violations of environmental and labor law. Immutable, divinely revealed law prevents excessive concentration of power in the hands of the state, and prevents lawmakers from serving corporate interests at the expense of public interests. Sharia prohibits interest-based

[173] Surah Baqarah, 123

financing, making the modern financial sector, including predatory lending, excessive indebtedness, and most financial crises impossible.

The extreme inequality of the modern world system and the associated immigration crises would also be impossible under Islamic law, which prescribes that Muslim and non-Muslim subjects of the Islamic state be allowed to travel, work, and trade freely between all lands ruled by sharia. Sweatshops and other such exploitative labor practices would become impossible if freedom to travel were determined by faith rather than ethnicity or national origin.

وَلَوْ أَنَّ أَهْلَ ٱلْقُرَىٰٓ ءَامَنُوا۟ وَٱتَّقَوْا۟ لَفَتَحْنَا عَلَيْهِم بَرَكَٰتٍ مِّنَ ٱلسَّمَآءِ
وَٱلْأَرْضِ وَلَٰكِن كَذَّبُوا۟ فَأَخَذْنَٰهُم بِمَا كَانُوا۟ يَكْسِبُونَ

> And if only the people of the cities had believed and feared Allah, We would have opened upon them blessings from the heaven and the earth; but they denied [the messengers], so We seized them for what they were earning.[174]

Most Islamic principles such as modesty, chastity, accountability, primacy of morality over profit, and prohibition on usury, were long established in the Western tradition. These are in fact universal principles of divine revelation. The West gradually abandoned these principles due to a crisis of faith which emerged due to more fundamental theological problems. Conceptualizing God as a human being and endowing human beings with divine authority opened the door to abuses so severe that it destroyed the credibility of all religious authority.

Turning away from the mercy of divine revelation inevitably leads to both spiritual and material destruction. This lesson applies not only to the history of Christendom, but also Islam. Muslims are also facing the

[174] Surah al A'raf, 96

consequences today of neglecting precepts of their religion, and Western hegemony is one key aspect of this.

وَلَوْلَا دَفْعُ ٱللَّهِ ٱلنَّاسَ بَعْضَهُم بِبَعْضٍ لَّفَسَدَتِ ٱلْأَرْضُ وَلَٰكِنَّ ٱللَّهَ ذُو فَضْلٍ عَلَى ٱلْعَٰلَمِينَ

> And if it were not for Allah checking [some] people by means of others, the earth would have been corrupted, but Allah is full of bounty to the worlds.[175]

Christians and Jews lived peacefully under Islamic law for centuries without producing horrors like the trans-Atlantic slave trade and the massacre of indigenous peoples around the world, world wars, or environmental devastation because they were held in check by the clear mandates of Islamic law and creed.

كُنتُمْ خَيْرَ أُمَّةٍ أُخْرِجَتْ لِلنَّاسِ تَأْمُرُونَ بِٱلْمَعْرُوفِ وَتَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ ٱلْمُنكَرِ وَتُؤْمِنُونَ بِٱللَّهِ وَلَوْ ءَامَنَ أَهْلُ ٱلْكِتَٰبِ لَكَانَ خَيْرًا لَّهُم مِّنْهُمُ ٱلْمُؤْمِنُونَ وَأَكْثَرُهُمُ ٱلْفَٰسِقُونَ

> You are the best nation produced [as an example] for mankind. You enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong and believe in Allah. If only the People of the Scripture had believed, it would have been better for them. Among them are believers, but most of them are defiantly disobedient.[176]

---

[175] Surah Baqarah, 251
[176] Surah al-Imran, 110

It is only when Muslims neglected and abandoned their duty to repel corruption that modern problems began to take hold. Believers in the theology of progress try to emphasize the gains of modernity while minimizing its harms, but this argument rests on two very flawed assumptions. Firstly, it depends on a Eurocentric perspective, since achieving these gains depended on inflicting tremendous harm on the rest of the world. Secondly, believing that modernity represents a true improvement in the human condition depends on a very narrow and materialistic perspective.

Those who argue that mass slaughter and slavery of of non-European peoples, commodification and mass marketing of female beauty and sexuality, and systemic normalization of usury and debt slavery, were "worth it" often point to the fact that humanity is now more materially prosperous on the whole than it has ever been. This perspective places quantity firmly over quality and completely ignores spiritual and psychological losses that come with these material gains. Is owning a car and having a perpetually full refrigerator worth living a hectic life with little to no time for remembering or praising God? Is it worth women losing security and stability in their relationships?

The apprehension many in the West have toward Islam is based to a large extent on material standard of living. Many modern luxuries and privileges depend on repressive modern states, an unjust international hierarchy, and an unsustainable, debt-based economy. Critics of Islam argue that to allow establishment of Islamic law would mean "going back" to simpler lifestyles and modes of economic organization. These fears are based in reality. There is no doubt that the rise of Islam, including increasing adoption of norms of gender segregation and veiling, would reduce the output of modern economies, rendering the world we live in all but impossible.

Is this really a cause for fear and anxiety? Is the possibility of undoing some of the gains of modernity really so terrifying? Certainly Islamic morality forces us to restrain our desires, but it is easy to see that following desires is often harmful if not governed by higher consciousness. Overeating can be enjoyable, but it can lead to indigestion and other health problems later on. The case is no different with the excessive consumption and luxuries. If we

fully understand the harms associated with many modern modes of economic production, we will realize that losing these things is nothing to fear.

A more important question is if "going back" is even avoidable. Proponents of leveraging immorality for profit argue that technological decline will lead to a resurgence of infectious disease rates and infant mortality rates. If we were to measure progress solely based on growth rate, consumption, and life expectancy we would also have to regard cancer cells as superior to healthy cells. But even acknowledging some of the benefits of modern medicine, can demonization of traditional gender roles and families really prevent technological decline? Although some eschatologies of the theology of progress believe in perpetual economic growth and development, history shows that technological civilizations rise and inevitably fall. Technology also engenders dependence — more and more people are dependent on medical technology for survival, so any decline will lead to deaths. Developing institutions (like families and tribes) that can take the place of large, centralized, high-tech institutions (like nation-states and multinational corporations) is a means of protecting ourselves against economic and technological decline which appears to all but the most blind believers in the theology of progress to be inevitable.

First and foremost, we must realize the futility of liberal eschatology and the falseness of the fears and hopes underlying it. Technology is not the solution to our problems, nor will we ever achieve god-like status by means of it. We must recognize that individuals like Elon Musk and Peter Thiel, who believe it is possible to obtain immortality by downloading our brains into computers or finding pharmaceutical solutions to aging, are deluded and not suited to be leaders of humanity or role models. The quest for technology and economic growth, on the most fundamental level, is an expression of the desire to avoid pain and death. Yet the death of every individual and the death of humanity as a whole is inescapable; every facet of the universe and God Himself testifies to this reality:

كُلُّ نَفْسٍ ذَائِقَةُ الْمَوْتِ وَإِنَّمَا تُوَفَّوْنَ أُجُورَكُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ فَمَن زُحْزِحَ عَنِ النَّارِ وَأُدْخِلَ الْجَنَّةَ فَقَدْ فَازَ وَمَا الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا إِلَّا مَتَاعُ الْغُرُورِ

> Every soul will taste death, and you will only be given your [full] compensation on the Day of Resurrection. So he who is drawn away from the Fire and admitted to Paradise has attained [his desire]. And what is the life of this world except the enjoyment of delusion.[177]

Fear of death is ultimately rooted in disbelief in the life after death. If there is an afterlife which is better than the present life, then it makes no sense to sacrifice preparations for the afterlife in order to enhance the worldly life. Pain and death are means to an end; pain may be a test by which we build our afterlife, or a means of spiritual purification. Death is the gateway by which we enter into the afterlife. Both excessive asceticism which weaken or strain the body and mind (as under Catholicism) and excessive materialism which distract from spiritual contemplation and preparation for death (as under liberalism) detract from this objective.

Wealth and poverty, rural and urban life, technical sophistication and simplicity — these polarities are part of an equilibrium which is upset by going to extremes on either side of the balance, whether it be by Christian asceticism or liberal materialism. "Going back" to simpler times is simply the universe seeking equilibrium. The supposed "progress" of modernity represents a severe deviation from equilibrium. We will all be forced to submit to the divine rule, willingly or unwillingly.

[177] Surah Al e Imran, 185

أَفَغَيْرَ دِينِ ٱللَّهِ يَبْغُونَ وَلَهُۥٓ أَسْلَمَ مَن فِي ٱلسَّمَٰوَٰتِ وَٱلْأَرْضِ طَوْعًا وَكَرْهًا وَإِلَيْهِ يُرْجَعُونَ

So is it other than the religion of Allah they desire, while to Him have submitted [all] those within the heavens and earth, willingly or by compulsion, and to Him they will be returned?[178]

We cannot escape the divine decree, and by embracing it we become agents or vicegerents of God's will. This is part of the purpose for which we were created:

وَإِذْ قَالَ رَبُّكَ لِلْمَلَائِكَةِ إِنِّي جَاعِلٌ فِي الْأَرْضِ خَلِيفَةً قَالُوا أَتَجْعَلُ فِيهَا مَنْ يُفْسِدُ فِيهَا وَيَسْفِكُ الدِّمَاءَ وَنَحْنُ نُسَبِّحُ بِحَمْدِكَ وَنُقَدِّسُ لَكَ قَالَ إِنِّي أَعْلَمُ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ

And [mention, O Muhammad], when your Lord said to the angels, "Indeed, I will make upon the earth a successive authority." They said, "Will You place upon it one who causes corruption therein and sheds blood, while we declare Your praise and sanctify You?" Allah said, "Indeed, I know that which you do not know."[179]

If believers in the theology of progress say that observing traditional norms of modesty and chastity will lead to "going back" to simpler times, then Muslims should enthusiastically agree! Technological development and economic growth driven by usury, injustice, and wastefulness are actually

[178] Surah Al-Imran, 83
[179] Surah Baqara, 30

detracting from our true purpose, so a reduction of wealth, luxury, or technological sophistication is not a loss, but rather submission to the inevitable ebbs and flows of life and death. This is the literal meaning of "Islam" — submission to divine decree. If we live in this state of submission, we can ride the peaks and troughs of the waves of life rather than exhausting ourselves trying to tame the sea. Though liberalism's propaganda machine might define this as being "undeveloped," this submission contains far more fulfillment and happiness than all the sensual pleasures of the world combined.

Like the Egyptian civilization ruled by the Pharaoh, the modern project of technological globalization has achieved impressive feats, but is ultimately waging an unwinnable war against God. Those who seek to uphold chastity and modesty and build traditional families and economies often feel the pressure of this system fighting them, but if their faith is sound, they also feel the support of Almighty God.

The extreme materialism of liberalism pushes people to seek fulfillment in crass sensualism, neglecting emotional and spiritual fulfillment. The internal void that results from this cycle of hedonism generates an insatiable hunger, and this hunger is the main driver of growth of Western civilization, particularly in recent decades. Islam has been the most successful force in opposing this self-destructive process. Islam, more than any other system of belief, contains the solutions to the problems facing our world.

The effectiveness of Islam in resisting a perverse and destructive world order is one of the numerous proofs of the veracity of the message of Muhammed ﷺ. Once a person understands the spiritual, emotional, and material harms resulting from Judeo-Christian hegemony, and realizes that Islam is by far the best remedy to these harms, it becomes apparent that Islam is a manifestation of the will of the living God of the Judeo-Christian tradition — a supreme, merciful and just Creator and Sustainer.

Gender segregation and the chastity and modesty it entails, is not only a means of preserving the emotional and psychological wellbeing of individuals, it is foundational to a specific kind of institutional environment. The tight knit social fabric resulting from the preservation of marriage and kinship will never reach the heights of consumption and production as a hyper-fragmented, individualistic society, but the function of such a society

inflicts far less damage and is much less prone to catastrophic failure. This is why we see world wars and ecological fallout emanating out of the West and Western forms of economic organization, rather than the Muslim world.

Corporate greed, broken families, unsustainable debt, environmental devastation and world wars are all symptoms of a deeper fundamental problem — the failure to recognize the greatness of God and accept human weakness. It is because of failure to recognize and remember the true nature of God that human beings develop an insatiable thirst for power. Both the drive for ever more powerful technology and the drive for men and women to be independent of each other are manifestations of this lust for power. God does not need any human being.

إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ لَغَنِيٌّ عَنِ ٱلْعَٰلَمِينَ

Indeed, Allah is free from need of the worlds.[180]

Yet the deep impulse of Christian creed tells people that they must emulate a human God. God is self-sufficient, and the hyper-individualism of modern life pushes people to strive toward ever more self-sufficiency. The West's fleeting power lies in this tension — the more isolated people become from each other, the more they consume and the stronger the economy becomes, but the impossible quest to fill the spiritual and emotional void people living this lifestyle feel drives moral decay, environmental destruction, and political conflict.

Islam, offers both immediate and long-term relief to this predicament. A simple but highly regimented and community oriented routine of worship, avoiding unnecessarily stimulation of desires, and personal practices of self discipline such as fasting train an individual to be grateful for what they have and patient with difficulties. On the social level, Islam prohibits practices that led to the Western civilization to become increasingly destructive toward itself and others. But most importantly, Islam

[180] Surah al Ankabut, 6

clearly teaches us that human beings are weak and finite, and that only God is complete.

From a broad, historical perspective, Western civilization's main motive is one of fleeing. It is fleeing from the horrors of its own past, and fleeing from the fear of death and pain. The pain of Western history is so great that it drove the West to spread across the entire world seeking a means to escape from its own pain. Western civilization's intense drive to seek growth, innovation, and visions of utopia is a reflection of the intensity of its historical trauma and inability to cope with that trauma.

The reason Islam never generated technological or scientific progress like that of the West is that it had no such intense misery to escape. Although Islamic law was imperfectly implemented, Islamic scholars as a whole never reached the level of corruption of the medieval Church. While there were sometimes high levels of inequality in Islamic societies, there was also far more social mobility, and inheritance law ensured that wealth inequality never reached the levels seen in the West.

With better distribution of wealth and power, there was no need for democratic revolutions or obsession with equality. With property rights of women safeguarded, their upkeep guaranteed, and options for divorce, women had economic leverage in household economies, there was no need for feminism. Since the Muslim world had no miserable past to escape, there was no need for utopian visions of a high-tech future. Without an interest based financial system, there was no need to monetize women or their labor and beauty, or to break down families or sexual morality to push them into the market.

The fear of "going back" is only justified from a European perspective, because Europe's past was much worse than the past of the Islamic world. Since "going back" to a way of life closer to equilibrium with the divine law is inevitable, the West must turn to Islam rather than Christianity.

Disentangling Islam and Feminism

As modern societies continue to suffer under the influence of ideologies like feminism and “red pill” ideology, it is important to realize that not only feminism is to blame, but all social, economic, and political systems interdependent with feminism. For critics or victims of feminism, this can be a difficult realization — it means that confronting the problems affecting families and marriage today requires a much more fundamental transformation than most are willing to make. In fact, Islam calls upon us to make this transformation.

This is a difficult pill to swallow, even for individuals who consider themselves committed Muslims, because of how interconnected many aspects of modern life are with feminism. The experience of industrialization and modernization in the Muslims world bears witness to this reality. Every attempt to build a modern industrial and bureaucratic system in a Muslim country has brought with it feminist ideology and lifestyles.

Giving up on the vision of building modern institutions is very difficult because most of us have been conditioned to view this kind of economic system as absolutely necessary. A radical departure from modern models of state and economy comes with great challenges. This is a difficult test, and God assures us that we will face such tests:

وَلَنَبْلُوَنَّكُم بِشَيْءٍ مِّنَ ٱلْخَوْفِ وَٱلْجُوعِ وَنَقْصٍ مِّنَ ٱلْأَمْوَٰلِ وَٱلْأَنفُسِ وَٱلثَّمَرَٰتِ ۗ وَبَشِّرِ ٱلصَّٰبِرِينَ

> And We will surely test you with something of fear and hunger and a loss of wealth and lives and fruits, but give good tidings to the patient.[181]

The key to passing the tests of life and death is faith, and knowledge is one means of increasing faith. Understanding how harmful modern political and economic systems are is one of the best ways to fortify our faith in

[181] Surah Baqarah, 2:155

preparation for these tests. Understanding the harms of abandoning revealed Islamic law is half of understanding its benefit.

In both the East and West, families are being ravaged by the effects of feminism. Divorce, relationship instability, and social isolation are at all time highs, leading to mental illness, drug addiction and crime. One reason Muslim community leaders are largely failing to contain the spread of these problems in Muslim communities is the mistaken belief that modern institutions and lifestyles represent "progress" rather than degeneration. Both the spread of feminist discourse and many other problematic ideas are directly related to *belief* in the necessity of Western economic models. Embracing modern economic systems and infrastructure has become the norm in most Muslim communities; in line with colonial programs, becoming a doctor or engineer in the Western academic system is regarded as the ideal career track for young Muslims. We often hear that Muslims have "fallen behind" the West, as if there is some kind of a race, and the West is closer to the finish line.

This situation has led to numerous legal rulings by Muslim scholars which compromise Islamic ethics for the sake of perceived necessity. The deficiency here is not in Islamic scholarship — Islamic law is indeed flexible and dynamic. Rather, the problem lies with a lack of understanding of the hidden realities of modern political and economic systems. Inability to see these realities is not an accident; colonial and neo-colonial indoctrination programs deliberately propagate perspectives that support Western interests. Pursuing Western education requires adopting a worldview which causes a person to perceive the benefits of Western economic systems and technologies while overlooking their many detrimental side effects.

One of the worst effects of this indoctrination is that it afflicts many Muslims with inferiority complexes. They come to believe that the only way to remedy their low sense of self worth is to try to emulate Western trajectories of economic and infrastructural development. In pursuing this goal, many compromise key aspects of their Islam, and some leave Islam completely.

This can all be avoided if we realize that Western "development" does not represent superiority at all. In fact, the West's technological advantage depends on Muslim inferiority complexes, because it is only by means of this sense of inferiority that the West convinces Muslims to

cooperate with and support them, and this cooperation and support is vital to their hegemony.

وَلَا تَهِنُوا وَلَا تَحْزَنُوا وَأَنْتُمُ الْأَعْلَوْنَ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ

> So do not weaken and do not grieve, and you will be superior if you are [true] believers.[182]

God promises victory to the believers conditional on their faith. The reality of this statement is visible in the current geopolitical balance between the West and Muslim world. Western power in fact relies on Muslims *believing* in the capacity of technology to change their circumstances. The liberal economic order would collapse, however, if Muslims were to opt out en masse. Victory is indeed within reach of the faithful.

While technology is an important factor in conflict, we have repeatedly seen technologically and economically inferior Muslim forces overcome major powers by means of faith, determination, patience, and social cohesion time and time again. From the early days of Islam, one of the characteristics of the Muslims has been achieving victory by means of faith rather than material means.

As long as Muslims continue to chase after (and much worse, *believe* in) the ideal of modern technological progress, seeing it as the solution to our ills, the influence of feminism within Muslim communities will continue to grow. If we truly believe that modern technology represents an absolute improvement in the human condition, then it follows logically that feminism is a moral good, because this technology was developed partly by means of feminism. This kind of thinking also underlies the Islamic banking paradigm, which seeks to use loopholes in sharia to create financial institutions which enable Muslims to integrate into the usury-based world financial system.

To immunize ourselves against these toxic beliefs, it is imperative that we develop educational materials and curricula to inform Muslims about the pitfalls and shortcomings of the "theology of progress." Understanding

[182] Surah Al-Imran, 139

deficits and crises of modernity and modern technology is a good start toward expelling feminism from Islamic discourse, but it is not enough. Many are too busy chasing after degrees and careers in high tech sectors to even think about the damage caused by these industries.

It is human nature to seek to climb as high as possible on whatever social hierarchy we live in. As long as we live in a hierarchy based upon the theology of progress, we shall remain caught in a system whose ultimate objective is to fight against the divine decree. Systems are based upon law, so getting out of the materialistic hierarchies of Western political and economic systems can only be achieved by establishing and living under Islamic law.

Stepping out of systems and institutions rooted in European law and history is a difficult project, but the construction of Islamic institutions demands it. Participation in an institution, whether it be an education system, a government, a corporation, or a military, shapes an individual and consumes a large portion of their time and energy. Building Islamic institutions and forming worldviews truly shaped by Islam requires turning away from and rejecting Western institutions. This requires resisting the promises of worldly benefit and status that draw people to these institutions, which in turn requires strong faith in the hereafter. This is a kind of "leap of faith."

وَمَن يَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللَّهِ فَهُوَ حَسْبُهُ

And whoever relies upon Allah – then He is sufficient for him.[183]

Loving Islam and hating injustice are two sides of the same coin; as one increases, so does the other. It is possible to increase in faith by understanding either the nature of Islam or the nature of injustice. The purpose of this book is to fortify the reader with faith by increasing their knowledge of the injustices and failures of the Western history and beliefs. Knowledge is only blessed, however, when implemented. Acting upon the perspective contained in this book means working actively to extract ourselves from institutions entangled with feminism, and to move toward

[183] Surah at-Talaq, 3

participation in and construction of Islamic institutions — including Islamic families and gender roles.

Avoiding mixing of men and women who can marry according to Islamic law is a key element of this. The Muslim community must not be lax in this regard, and non-Muslims should take note of the beneficial effects these cultural practices have on Muslim communities and consider accepting Islam. Men must strive to lower their gaze, and focus their attention and affection on their wives.

It is also critical that Muslim men make the utmost effort to fulfill the Islamic rights of their wives. Every Muslim can see in our circles of families and friends how Muslim women are driven to embrace feminist rhetoric and seek financial independence by irresponsible and abusive men. This experience need not even be direct — daughters seeing their mothers suffer under an abusive or irresponsible father are also more likely to seek refuge from such behavior, and feminism offers to provide that refuge.

Abundant Islamic sermons and literature extoll the importance of proper relations within the family. Many of these books and lectures overlook, however, the structural causes of much of the selfish and toxic behavior inside of marriages. Bringing our personal conduct in line with Islamic ideals is only half of the solution. Corporations, governments, and financial institutions embedded in the Western system all have an interest in breaking down the family and promoting selfishness and individualism as a means to economic growth. This is a system that rewards selfish and immoral behavior and punishes mercy and piety. Fighting systems based upon rebellion against God is just as important as self-purification and refinement of manners.

The construction of liberal empire is built on the degradation of extended family and community structures, and it is best countered by means of the construction of robust marriages and families. The areas most well-suited to this project are those with the strongest existing kinship networks. We already see that highly tribal societies like those in Afghanistan, Yemen, the Sahel and Somalia are at the forefront of resisting liberal empire. The capacity of these highly tribal societies to successfully wage insurgencies against the most powerful militaries in the world is directly linked to both the integrity of their families and the strength of their faith.

Tribal networks in these societies fulfill many of the same functions as the institutions of modern liberal states, but with much greater resource efficiency. Tribal societies governed by Islamic principles cannot produce as much as modern economies, but they also need much less to survive and thrive. They cannot match the power of large centralized states, but they are also far more resilient and less prone to catastrophic failure. Such societies are much better positioned to weather political, economic and ecological crises than superpowers highly dependent on resource availability and global supply chains.

Opting out of Western institutions and laboring to construct Islamic communities and societies may come with a reduction in material wealth, but it also helps to insulate us against the material, psychological, and spiritual consequences of an unsustainable and unjust system. The importance of migration (*hijra*) and political and military struggle (*jihad*) is clear here. Part of the example of the Prophet ﷺ is to leave an oppressive society that rejects God's guidance, and to struggle against it from his new home.

As long as Muslims live under legal systems based on liberalism, feminism will continue to infiltrate and influence Muslim communities. Those who wish to struggle against this mental colonization must strive not only to uphold gender segregation in their own families and communities, but also to migrate to areas that are more supportive of Islamic traditions and to support the expansion of Islamic rule. Until we live in societies built upon the foundation of revelation, all efforts to preserve traditional values and build Islamic communities and families will slow but not stop the process of moral and social decay we are currently witnessing.

Muslims will never be able to directly compete with models of production based upon immorality, just as it is impossible for an honest athlete to compete with an athlete who uses all manner of performance enhancing drugs. If Muslims desire what the West has obtained of economic "development" by means of destroying families and monetizing the beauty, labor, and sexuality of women, then Muslim societies will experience the same kind of decline and decay currently afflicting Western societies.

The power obtained by means of immorality and rebellion against God is only temporary, and it leads to destruction in the long term, both in this life and the next. If we understand the true price of this power, it will be

easier to stop chasing after it. Once we no longer view this model as something to be imitated, it will be much easier to bear the sacrifices necessary to construct communities and societies in harmony with God's will.

Seeking Truth through History

History is as much about the future as the past. By studying history, we seek to derive lessons that can serve us in the future. One of the most important historical lessons contained in this book is that we must not underestimate the importance of creed and theology. Though some beliefs may seem benign at first, over the course of centuries they can have serious effects. One byproduct of the dominance of secular thought is that even many perspectives on history have been stripped of this religious awareness.

If we fail to recognize that social, political, and economic problems are related to false beliefs, then we can easily fall into the trap of secularism — treating all religions as equally valid. This idea is being aggressively propagated within the Muslim world as a way of neutralizing Islamic resistance to injustice. This line of reasoning points to the good manners of Christians and Jews, and challenges the idea that seemingly "good people" could be condemned solely because of false creedal beliefs. In the Noble Quran, God repeatedly rebukes those who attempt to place faith and disbelief on equal footing.

قُلْ هَلْ يَسْتَوِي ٱلْأَعْمَىٰ وَٱلْبَصِيرُ أَمْ هَلْ تَسْتَوِي ٱلظُّلُمَٰتُ وَٱلنُّورُ ۗ

Say, "Is the blind equivalent to the seeing? Or is darkness equivalent to light?[184]

Those who seek to make believers and disbelievers equal often argue that this is "tolerance" and a means of achieving peace, but looking deeply at

[184] Surah ar-Ra'd, 16

the nature of beliefs and their impact on society, it is apparent that there are beliefs which are beneficial to humanity and those which are not. Treating both beneficial and harmful beliefs equally may be a means of avoiding conflict in the short term, but in the long term it will lead to much greater harm than whatever conflict it avoids. The lessons of the history presented in this book stand as evidence for the importance of sound beliefs.

To know the truth is to know God, and God may be known both through his revelation and through the creation. Distortion and abuse of revelation has pushed the world to its present crisis of materialism and obsession with science. Thankfully, the study of science points to the truth of revelation; many scientists have embraced Islam because their field of expertise caused them to realize the veracity of the Quran.

سَنُرِيهِمْ ءَايَٰتِنَا فِي ٱلْأَفَاقِ وَفِيٓ أَنفُسِهِمْ حَتَّىٰ يَتَبَيَّنَ لَهُمْ أَنَّهُ ٱلْحَقُّ ۗ أَوَلَمْ
يَكْفِ بِرَبِّكَ أَنَّهُۥ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ شَهِيدٌ

> We shall show them Our signs in every region of the earth and in themselves, until it becomes clear to them that this is the Truth. Is it not enough that your Lord witnesses everything?[185]

The entire created universe, including the beauty of the heavens and earth and our own bodies and souls glorify our Creator.

تُسَبِّحُ لَهُ ٱلسَّمَٰوَٰتُ ٱلسَّبْعُ وَٱلْأَرْضُ وَمَن فِيهِنَّ ۚ وَإِن مِّن شَيْءٍ إِلَّا
يُسَبِّحُ بِحَمْدِهِۦ وَلَٰكِن لَّا تَفْقَهُونَ تَسْبِيحَهُمْ ۗ إِنَّهُۥ كَانَ حَلِيمًا غَفُورًا

[185] Surah Fussilat, 53

> The seven heavens and the earth and whatever is in them exalt Him. And there is not a thing except that it exalts [Allah] by His praise, but you do not understand their [way of] exalting. Indeed, He is ever Forbearing and Forgiving.[186]

Reflecting on history is actually a way of reflecting on our own souls, because we are in many ways a product of the past. The signs of God are visible not only in the beauty and bounties of the natural world, but also the pain and trauma of history which shape our psychology and our communities. This is because we can see how straying from God's guidance leads to suffering and misery. In this, God's mercy and compassion become manifest.

Likewise, in looking at the history of Western civilization, we can see the ways in which Christianity clashes with human nature, and the ways in which Islam is in harmony with it. From this it is possible to conclude that the source of the revelation of Islam and the source of human nature are one and the same. We can also conclude from looking at this history that Christianity contains many elements of truth. The power and achievements of Christian civilization are undeniable.

How to reconcile this problem? Western civilization cannot dismiss Christianity, or go back to pre-Christian times; the transformative power of Christianity's message is irreversible. Islam is the only way forward for the West. It is the only religious tradition with an effective and coherent handling of Christianity that also offers a concrete and viable vision for an alternative to the post-Christian, post-liberal world order. Both logic and history support this conclusion.

Logically, it is possible to see the kinds of policies, norms and attitudes that Islamic theology instills in believers. It is also possible to envision how these ideas and behaviors shape society and history. Centuries of history to confirm the impact of Islamic beliefs on human societies.
Beyond reflecting on history, this book is meant to make the reader reflect on the impact of theology on history, because in this impact we can see the work of God and better know Him.

---

[186] Surah al-Isra, 44

The foundation of Islam is the testimony of faith:

لا اله الا الله

There is no deity except God.

This phrase consists of two elements; negation and affirmation. Truly knowing the truth requires first recognizing and rejecting falsehood. The more we realize the harmful impact of false doctrines, the more we will recognize the benefit of the truth. The more we realize the harm of worshipping other than Allah, the more we will see the compassion of our Lord for prohibiting it. The more we recognize the mercy and generosity of God, the more we will love Him and the stronger we will become, God willing, in our worship of Him.

The history of feminism contains many lessons which confirm and demonstrate God's wisdom and mercy. Among them is that making any likeness of God in the image of a created being is a very dangerous sin. Another lesson is that excessive denial of the pleasures of the flesh can lead to other forms of extremism, as monasticism and rejection of women as a source of evil eventually gave rise to a culture gripped by lust and gluttony. God willing, readers can find many other lessons in this story upon contemplation.

There is great beauty and wisdom in traditional configurations of gender relations. Whenever and wherever Islam is properly implemented, relations between men and women reflect the divine harmony of nature, increasing the love, mercy, cooperation, and mutual respect between men and women. By contrast, rebelling against divine order leads to an increase in enmity, resentment, animosity and abusive relations between men and women. God willing, this book will serve as a call toward constructing a society based upon God and family, and a call to abandon beliefs and behaviors that lead to fragmentation, individualism and egoism, and excessive materialism — the bitter fruit of a world ruled by the ideologies descended from Christian, Jewish and pagan theology.

I ask God to make this book a means of fortifying its readers, the Muslim *ummah*, and humanity as a whole with faith in the wisdom of God's commands and the divine order, and love for them. May it increase our

motivation to work and make sacrifices to bring ourselves, our families, and our communities closer to God and to be more conformant with His will. And I will close by saying that all praise belongs to God, the Lord of the worlds. And may peace and prayer be upon his Messenger Muhammad and upon his family and companions. Amen.